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Imagining and creating new possibilities for self and society : narratives of Nepalese university students gone abroad

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IMAGINING AND CREATING NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR SELF AND SOCIETY: NARRATIVES OF NEPALESE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS GONE ABROAD

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

More and more students from Nepal are leaving their native land for higher education and coming to the United States. According to the Institute of International Education's 2007 *Open Door Report*, the number of Nepalese students enrolled in colleges and universities in the United States increased by 28 percent in the 2006-2007 academic year, totaling 7,754 students, and making Nepal the thirteenth leading country of origin for international students in the United States. During the previous academic year that number had increased by 25 percent.

Why are so many Nepalese leaving Nepal for higher education, at great expense to their families and communities? The unstable social, political, and economical situation in Nepal over the past decade has contributed to the outpouring of Nepalese students. The disruptions to education caused by the conflict between Maoist rebels and the government have been significant. In an article entitled *In Nepal, Colleges in Flames* (Overland 2002: A52), the author writes:

> After years of low-level skirmishes between Maoists and the police, the rebels have changed tactics. They have gone on the offensive not only against security forces, but also in attacks on the country's infrastructure. And they aren't just sabotaging power plants and blowing up bridges. They are also making targets of schools and universities.

While a cease-fire between Maoists and the government was signed in November 2006, violent clashes between ethnic groups and the postponement of elections that were supposed to take place in June 2007 have overshadowed the peace agreement. More than 60 people have been killed (Nepal's Prime Minister Calls for Peace, Unity,

Good Will 2007: 1) since the peace agreement was signed, and elections have yet to take place.

As students from Nepal go through their studies in the United States, they must consider what they will do and where they will go after they finish their studies and obtain their degrees. Leaving one's country to study abroad is a transformative event which has the potential to change one's understanding of self, other, and society. Crawshaw, Callen, and Tusting (2001: 101-112) argue that international students' understanding of their identity changes during periods of residence abroad. The researchers observed and documented these changes through student diaries, and argue that an "intercultural self" emerges as students explore questions of identity, cross-cultural awareness, and their place in the world. What students decide to do after the completion of their studies in higher education can have significant implications for the future of a country in the process of development such as Nepal. At one point it was thought that if these students stayed abroad after the completion of their studies, their skills and knowledge would be lost to the native country forever. However in addressing the issue of brain drain, Altbach (2004: 14) argues that in higher education, academics tend to "keep in close contact with their countries of origin and, often maintaining scientific and academic relationships with colleagues and institutions at home." These types of exchanges are more typical in countries where the academic systems are well-developed in the country of origin. In Nepal, efforts to develop the education system only began in 1951, with an emphasis on increasing universal access to primary education. The system of higher education in

Nepal has not been able to expand to meet the needs of its citizens who are seeking quality tertiary education.

Using a critical hermeneutic orientation, this research explored the issues of identity, solicitude and imagination as they relate to Nepalese university students who are studying in the United States, and those who have returned to Nepal to work after completing their studies in the United States. These issues were explored through conversations between the researcher and current students from Nepal attending Southwest Minnesota State University as well as Nepalese graduates who studied in Minnesota and have returned to Nepal to work. Conversations with several Nepalese in Nepal who work in academia, the government, and development also informed this research, and their conversations were essential in that they presented interpretations of the issues and events through the eyes of those who are parents of students going abroad and elders in the Nepalese community. The research conversations were guided by the following questions. How do Nepalese students abroad or who have studied abroad see themselves in relation to their homeland? How do they understand development? How can development guided by solicitude transform Nepal? Where do these students see themselves living in the future? How will their cultural heritage and their experiences abroad contribute to new possibilities for Nepal?

These research conversations sought to open up new possibilities for self and society through critical interpretations of the events at hand, new understandings that arise from those interpretations, and ethical action that is undertaken by individuals because of these new understandings. Ricoeur (1976: 94) writes, "I say that interpretation is the process by which disclosure of new modes of being . . . gives to

the subject a new capacity for knowing himself." A critical hermeneutic approach allowed for the researcher and the research participants to approach and explore the issue at hand from perspectives that a positivistic approach would not have allowed. More importantly (Herda 1999: 89), the research participants and researcher were engaged collaboratively in the research process, building relationships, and imagining possible futures that are worth working toward.

For the past ten years I have worked in international education as an instructor of English both in the United States and abroad. During that time I have become increasingly interested in the complex relationships between social, political, and economical factors which influence international students' educational experiences. In recent years I have become acquainted with the growing Nepalese student community at Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU), a rural liberal arts university with an enrollment of 3,300 full-time and part-time students. As of the 2008 spring semester, 176 of those students were from Nepal.

I have had many occasions to meet the Nepalese students and develop relationships with them through visits to campus, conversations, and participation in intercultural events in the community. The development of these relationships has been facilitated by the assistant director of International Student Services Office at SMSU, who is also my mother. She and I have engaged in many conversations about the increasing Nepalese student population at SMSU over the past few years because the unanticipated and significant growth of this international student population has forced the administration, faculty, and university community at large to reflect on

organizational practices and the taken for granted beliefs of members of that community.

My initial research interests were in exploring relevant organizational and academic issues at the university which had resulted from the unanticipated growth of this student population. However, as I listened to Nepalese students speak about their experiences in the informal conversations we had, it became clear that the Nepalese students and their experiences were at the heart of this research. Their conversations would also have important implications for American universities such as SMSU which are experiencing growing enrollments of students from Nepal.

Statement of the Research Topic

The number of students from Nepal who are leaving their native country to pursue degrees in higher education abroad is increasing significantly every year. The United States is the preferred destination for Nepalese students who go abroad for higher education. Nepal's Ministry of Education and Sports publishes a report every year entitled *Nepal in Educational Figures.* According to the 2005 report (13-14), the number of self-financed Nepalese students studying in the United States increased every year since 1995. In 1995 there were 225 self-financed Nepalese students in American universities and colleges. For the 2005-2006 school year, the number of Nepalese students coming to the United States to pursue a post-secondary degree increased by 25 percent, totaling 6,061 students, and that number grew by another 28 percent for the following year (Open Door Report 2006, 2007). These increases make Nepalese students one of the fasting growing international student populations in the United States.

Many Nepalese students in American colleges and universities tend to rely on family members or friends who are already students in the United States when they make decisions about what schools they would like to attend. Consequently, once Nepalese students begin to enroll in a given university, it is likely that more Nepalese students will follow. The political and social situation at hand in Nepal is a contributing force to the current phenomenon. Few job prospects, violence and instability, and a lack of funding for education are also contributing factors. A growing number of students who have the financial resources and familial support are leaving Nepal for higher education. Through the theoretical lens of critical hermeneutics, this research explored the issues of identity, solicitude, and imagination as they relate to Nepalese university students who are studying in the United States and those who have returned to Nepal to work after completing their studies in the United States.

Background of the Research Topic

An article published in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (Overland 2002: A52) describes the education standards in Nepal to be a continuous state of decline due to disruption in education because of the rebel insurgency that began in 1996. The fighting between Maoist rebels and the Royal Nepalese Army has disrupted education at all levels in Nepal. The disruption of classes seems almost acceptable in light of the reported human rights abuses involving educators and students. Adhikari (2003: 31) reports that 111 teachers and 188 students had been killed in the conflict between 1996 and 2003. O'Malley (2007: 7) reports on the magnitude of the situation, reporting that between January 1, 2002 and December 31, 2006 more than

10,000 teachers and nearly 22,000 students were abducted. Students are often abducted for re-education courses in Maoist ideology and returned to their homes (Lawson 2005) or recruited directly into the Maoist forces.

Students in private schools and colleges have been particularly susceptible to attacks by rebels. Overland (2002: A52) explains that Maoists condemn private education and attack these institutions because they object to this form of elitism. It seems that the Maoist's concerns about the disparities between private and government education are not without merit. Vaux (2006: 4) writes, "Few officials now send their children to government schools- a fifth of children now attend private schools . . . Officials have no personal stake in the state education system."

Koirala (2004: 69) elaborates on the instability of education by describing the dangers that politics have posed to higher education in Nepal. For example, students with connections to people in power are often granted admission to colleges and universities over more capable students who lack this social capital, similar to the system of legacy admissions in Ivy League schools in the United States where students are given preference in the admission process because someone in their family is an alumnus of that particular institution. In addition, colleges and universities in Nepal are vulnerable to strikes, demonstrations, and violence which disrupt the learning environment. Finally, university and college students are influenced by political agendas as campuses become soap boxes for propaganda, shifting the focus away from education. Contributing to the educational decline are struggles for literacy, especially amongst the lower castes, and a lack of funding for

education. Overland (2002: A52) reports that only 2 percent of educational funding in Nepal is dedicated to higher education.

The constant state of unrest in higher education in Nepal over the past decade has become a part of the collective memory of Nepalese students and has affected how these students imagine a future for themselves and for their country. A World Bank Report (2007: 29) entitled *Young People Speak Out: Youth Consultations for the World Development Report 2007* gives some insight into the despair young people feel as it reports, "In Nepal, young people identify the lack of opportunities for many young Nepalese as the key reasons for the current conflict." The political situation in Nepal has reached a critical juncture with the signing of a peace accord between the ruling coalition and the Maoist rebels on November 16, 2006 (Adhikari 2006: 1). Whether or not this peace accord will be successful depends, in part, on the ability of Nepalese both abroad and in Nepal to imagine and to tell their story differently.

Significance of Study

Understanding international students and their experiences better is critical in higher education if educators and administrators are committed to providing a quality educational experience for international students who have come to the United States to pursue a post-secondary degree. Altbach (2004a) claims that prospective international students no longer find the United States as welcoming as they did in the past and that they are in many cases choosing to go to other countries which are aggressively recruiting these students. Gaining insight into the Nepalese student population which is one of the fastest growing international student populations in the

United States could help universities and colleges recruit and retain similar international student populations.

There is also a need for research that looks at international students who are studying in a rural setting because their experiences are different than those of international students attending universities or colleges in urban settings. With increasing access to technology, potential international students anywhere in the world can choose a university or college in the United States by conducting research on the Internet. Moreover, it is cheaper to study at lesser-known universities in rural areas, and financial considerations are a matter of paramount importance in the decision to send a student from Nepal to study abroad.

I visited with officials at the Ministry of Education and Sports while I was in Kathmandu in June 2007. Students from Nepal who wish to study abroad must receive what is called a No Objection Letter from the Ministry of Education and Sports that is presented to immigration officials when students leave the country. Students wishing to go abroad for higher education must present themselves in person at the ministry to meet with officials and receive the letter. During this interview, the student's name is hand-written in a ledger along with information about the student's financial assets, the university or college being attended abroad, and the intended major. I was told that more than one hundred students a day came to the Ministry of Education and Sports to obtain their No Objection Letter. Figure 1 shows students waiting for their interview outside the Ministry of Education and Sports.

Figure 1. Nepalese Students Outside Ministry of Education and Sports in Kathmandu

Officials at the Ministry of Education and Sports allowed me to leaf through the ledger for 2007, and I was struck by the vast number of students listed who were going to attend colleges and universities in towns and cities across America's heartland in places such as Minnesota, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Kansas. Southwest Minnesota State University where the research participants for this research were students was listed throughout the ledger. I asked why many students from Nepal were drawn to smaller universities and colleges outside of metropolitan areas. I was told that students applied to these universities because the cost of tuition is often more feasible for Nepalese students and their families and that they believe they have a better chance of receiving a student visa than if they tried to attend larger, more prestigious colleges or universities in urban areas. Moreover, they are also attracted to places where large groups of Nepalese are already present.

I chose to focus my research on Nepalese students because the number of Nepalese students coming to the United States is rapidly increasing. Little research has been conducted that explores their experiences in American institutions of higher education in relation to the socio-political context from which they come. Research looking at interpretations of identity for Nepalese living and studying abroad is an integral part of re-imagining and reconfiguring the future for a country where the past and present are mired in turmoil and unrest. Furthermore, there is a lack of qualitative research that engages the research participants in the research process. Few researchers have talked to Nepalese students who have gone abroad for their studies to explore the issues at hand. Each of the individuals who participated in this research has the potential to contribute to social changes in Nepal. It is the hope of this researcher that by having engaged in this research, that potential has a better chance at actualization.

Much of the research involving international students in higher education is grounded in positivism and is concerned primarily with knowledge about international students after their arrival in the country of study. I propose that there is an ethical imperative to explore this issue with a critical hermeneutic orientation. The historicity of the Nepalese students then becomes an integral part of the research process. Focusing on the local context of education and a particular group of international students such as the Nepalese students at SMSU allows for new understandings to emerge that may open up new worlds of possibilities for students, organizations, and communities.

Summary

The number of Nepalese students leaving Nepal for higher education is mounting while the current socio-political situation in Nepal remains unstable despite additional attempts at reconciliation between opposing forces and renewed efforts to further a democratic movement. There is a need to explore the experiences of the Nepalese students who have come to universities and colleges in the United States in search of higher education that will provide them with new understandings, better opportunities, and a chance at a different future for themselves and for others in Nepal. A critical hermeneutic approach to this research did not seek to declare solutions to the social, political, or economic problems in Nepal; rather, it has the potential to open up new worlds of possibilities which emerge from conversations with participants. This research aspired to encourage a new orientation toward understandings between self and others both abroad and in Nepal that has implications for ethical action; action that begins with the individual.

The following chapters provide a context for the research. In Chapter Two, a brief review of Nepal is presented. In Chapter Three a review of literature relating to international higher education in the United States, development, and the research categories of identity, solicitude, and imagination within a critical hermeneutic framework are presented. In Chapter Four the research process, conceptual framework, research categories, data collection, data analysis, pilot study, and background of the researcher are described. In Chapter Five the data is presented, and in Chapter Six the data is analyzed. Finally, in Chapter Seven the summary, implications, future research, personal reflection, and conclusion are presented.

CHAPTER II: NEPAL

Introduction

Within the critical hermeneutic framework of this research, Nepalese students cannot be disassociated from the historicity they bring with them when they come to the United States for their studies. Therefore, it is necessary to provide an overview of the collective history these students share. It is beyond the scope of this research to present the details of Nepal's history, traditions, and beliefs because they are incredibly complex. Key ideas and events have been selected which are most relevant to the exodus of Nepalese students who are pursuing higher education abroad.

Brief History of Modern Nepal

The modern history of Nepal is presented by Singh (2007), and his discussion is used as a basis for this overview. An assortment of small principalities became the kingdom of Nepal when they were unified by the Gorkha King, Prithivi Narayan Shah in 1768. The unification of Nepal continued with the establishment of the monarchy. In 1816, after two years of war with Britain, Nepal signed a peace treaty that allowed the country to retain its autonomy. However, Nepal was forced to cede certain territories to the British and to allow a British representative to permanently reside in Kathmandu. This should not be confused with colonial rule; an important part of Nepal's history is that this country has never experienced colonial rule. From 1846 to 1950 the Rana family enjoyed a monopoly of political power in Nepal secured by hereditary Prime Ministership. While the prime minister was the public face of power, the king retained his title but was confined to the inside of the palace

by the Rana administration. The Rana family also enjoyed a monopoly in regards to education. Up until 1950 only members of the Rana family were allowed to receive an education, which was an intentional attempt of the elite rulers to keep the rest of the population fettered by the shackles of ignorance.

The political monopoly of the Rana administration ended when the Nepali Congress was established during the period from 1950 to 1951. During the 1950s attempts were made to draft a constitution and to establish a representative form of government. In 1959 the first democratic elections were held, and B.P. Koirala became the Prime Minister. However, internal conflicts and political struggles were the demise of this short-lived democratic movement. On December 15, 1960 the parliamentary system was discarded when King Mahendra assumed direct control of the country. He argued that the parliamentary democracy was alien to Nepalese traditions and history. In 1962 the king introduced a new constitution, laying the foundation for a new political system known as Panchayat "democracy". Nepal was declared to be a sovereign monarchical Hindu state. The Panchayat system created a hierarchy of councils, with the towns and villages on the bottom and the National Panchayat on top. This system, while representative, permitted King Mahendra to direct and control the country. King Mahendra maintained his rule over Nepal until his death in 1972 when his son Birendra became king.

The period between King Birendra's ascension to the throne and 1990 was marred by continued struggles between the monarchy, the Panchayat representatives, and the people of Nepal. These conflicts resulted in escalating discontent and civil unrest. The People's Movement began in 1990, quickly forcing King Birendra to lift

the ban on political parties and to dissolve the Panchayat political system. A new constitution for the Kingdom of Nepal was promulgated in November 1990, and general elections were held in 1991. Once again, struggles for power preoccupied leaders and the general population suffered in the meantime.

Dissatisfaction with the ruling powers led to the People's War that began in 1996 and continued for 10 years. Maoist rebels and royal forces have waged a civil war that has terrorized the countryside and cities of Nepal, leaving thousands of casualties and reports of human rights abuses in their wake. Both sides signed a peace treaty in November 2006, and general elections will be held in April 2008 after having been twice rescheduled.

In the midst of the People' Movement, the people of Nepal were thrown into further chaos on June 1, 2001. The massacre of the royal family, including King Birendra, within palace walls by the Crown Prince Dipendra contributed to an already unstable political and social situation in Nepal. The people of Nepal grappled with the horrific event and distrusted the explanations which were provided by figures in authority. Gregson (2002: 223) writes:

> In the absence of hard facts, rumor has a habit of taking on a life of its own, and nowhere more so than in Nepal, whose citizens have long suspected they are fed only half-truths by those in authority. For them, truth is a variable and often a negotiable commodity.

All across Nepal, people questioned what had happened and what these events meant for Nepalese society. The massacre was a violent catalyst for Nepalese to take a critical look at Nepal's past, present, and future. This quest for meaning is exemplified in the book *Forget Kathmndu: An Elegy for Democracy* written by a renowned Nepalese journalist Manjushree Thapa (2005: 1-2) who states:

> In this period [after the palace massacre] it wasn't easy for Nepalis to trace what was going wrong, because so much was. And those who live in the thick of events more easily experience them than understand them . . . If we in Nepal were unable to understand our present, so too was the rest of the world.

This violent act, the massacre of the royal family by one of its own, marked the rapid decline of the monarchy and a call by its people to expedite reform. On December 26, 2007 Nepal's parliament voted to abolish the centuries old monarchy in favor of becoming a republic.

A modern history of political instability has had detrimental effects on all facets of Nepalese society. Nepalese students in the United States with whom I have had conversations express frustration and despair regarding the political and ensuing social and economic instability that have dominated the national narrative. However, there is a sense of hope that the situation in Nepal may change if the cease-fire is able to quell violence throughout the country and allow Nepalese citizens to focus their attention on critical issues such as increasing the quality of and access to education, reducing poverty, and developing sustainable economic practices.

A Demographic Perspective of Nepalese Society

Nepal as seen in Figure 2 (US Department of State 2007) on the following page is a landlocked country situated in the Himalayan mountain range between China and India. The country can be divided into three physiographic regions; the Mountain Region to the north where human habitation and economic activity is limited, the Hill Region in the center of the country which includes the Kathmandu Valley, and the Terai Region to the south which consists of fertile plains and dense forests (Shrestha 1993: 56-60). The Terai is the economic breadbasket of Nepal. There are approximately 27 million people living in Nepal where the annual per

capita income is US$ 230 (Nepal Poverty Report 2003: 121). The abject poverty of much of the population makes this country one of the poorest countries in the world.

Figure 2. Map of Nepal

Poverty is essentially a rural phenomenon with 90 percent of the impoverished population living in rural areas. Most of the wealth of Nepal is concentrated in Kathmandu Valley, where more than 95 percent of the Nepalese students at SMSU are reported to be from (Sandra Nelson in conversation with author, November 16, 2006). Most Nepalese rely on agriculture to earn their living, which is the mainstay of the national economy. The principal agricultural products include rice, corn, wheat, and sugarcane. After agriculture, the next largest contributors to the national economy are manufacturing and tourism. Both industries have suffered setbacks due to the national instability that intensified following the Maoist insurgency in 1996. The unemployment rate in Nepal is just over 40 percent. Foreign aid is a major source of funding for the government of Nepal. In the 2006-2007 fiscal year, foreign aid in the form of loans and grants accounted for 23.6 percent of the government

budget, and the ratio of total foreign aid to gross domestic production was 4.45 percent (Three-Year Interim Plan National Planning Commission 2007: 29-30).

A growing source of income in Nepal has come in the form of remittances, money sent back to Nepal through official and unofficial channels by Nepalese who work, either legally or illegally, in a foreign country. Malaysia, Japan, Korea and the Gulf countries are popular destinations for Nepalese who are eager to engage in unskilled labor that will provide them with money to support relatives back in Nepal. Gaudel (2006: 14) states that in fiscal year 2005-2005 workers' remittances accounted for approximately 65 billion rupees, as compared to 140 million rupees received as foreign direct investment. Gaudel (2006: 15) writes in his conclusion, "The young and energetic generation remaining outside should be attracted to come back again with skilled knowledge and experience and to provide the way for utilizing their remittances in productive sector." Gaudel's statement reflects current social attitudes toward those who leave Nepal for work. Due to the migration of the male population, there are currently 89 males to 100 females in Nepal (National Planning Commission Three-Year Interim Plan 2007: 9).

According to Stash and Hannum (2001: 357) there are more than 60 caste-ethnic groups in Nepal. In Nepal 82 percent of the population is reported to be Hindu. Castes have traditionally played an important role in Hindu kingdoms, and the negative effects of the social stratification are still felt today in Nepal. Members of lower-castes are more apt to be poor, uneducated or undereducated, and marginalized. In their analysis of the Nepalese educational system Stash and Hannum (2001: 365) found that the probability of completion of the higher primary grades

decreased with movement down the caste hierarchy. Koirala (2005: 105) explains that the mingling of religion and state in Nepal contributes to the legitimization of power in upper castes. While cast considerations were removed from the law in 1963, stratification of the population by caste continues to affect daily life. The 1963 change in Nepalese law could not instantaneously erase centuries of ideology. Parish (1996: 198) writes:

> Caste ideology constructs and legitimizes differences: it provides a theory for defining self and other, for justifying society. Others are not like self, caste ideology asserts; they are essentially different kinds of humanity, separated by essence, opposed by substance, and ranked by nature.

For understandings of self and other to change, Parish (1996: 199) goes on to write that it is in the realm of the moral imagination that these changes will take place. The secularization of Nepal is currently underway. The Constituent Assembly elections in 2008 will determine whether the people of Nepal choose to become a republic, thereby officially abolishing the Hindu monarchy.

The development of the education system in Nepal is relatively young, with efforts to create a primary, secondary and tertiary education system only commencing in earnest after 1951 when the Rana regime ended. For centuries, education had been accessible exclusively to the wealthy and the upper castes. Having an uneducated society made it easier for rulers to control their citizens. According to Shrestha (1993: 92-94), "The Rana rulers, who placed Nepal under their feudal yoke for about 100 years until the beginning of the 1950s, feared an educated public." Shrestha goes on to write that in the early 1950s, the literacy rate was a dismal 5 percent.

One of the challenges inherent in developing the education system in Nepal has been finding a way to deal with the linguistic, cultural, religious, and caste

differences that existed throughout the country. Pradhan (2005: 11) explains the government's solution to this dilemma when he writes:

> The government attempted to promote Nepali as the national language and the sole medium of instruction in schools. The first National Educational Planning Commission went so far as to argue in the early 1950s that, "If the younger generation is taught to use Nepali as the basic language then other languages will gradually disappear, and greater national strength and unity will result."

The approach adopted by the government focused on the critical issues facing them at the time, but failed to consider the implications of their policies for the future. The current minority voices expressing discontent throughout Nepal stem from the linguistic and cultural oppression minorities have suffered in Nepal.

In the mere 50 years since efforts for the development of the education system in Nepal began in 1951, some improvements have been achieved. More children have been enrolled in school. According to the 2005 report from the Ministry of Education and Sports, the net enrollment rate of the official age group for primary education was 84 percent, and for lower secondary education the net enrollment rate decreased to 44 percent. A further decline in enrollments marked secondary education, with only 32 percent of the official age group attending school.

Access to education and enrollment in educational institutions continues to reflect the inequity between boys and girls as well as men and women in Nepal. Girls enrolled in primary school account for 45 percent of the students, 44 percent in secondary school, and 27 percent in higher education. For Nepalese over the age of 15 who can read and write, the literacy rate is 49 percent. Broken down by gender, estimates show that the literacy rate for men is about 64 percent, whereas the literacy rate for women falls to about 35 percent. Poverty, gender and caste have had

negative effects on education in Nepal, but one cannot overlook the effects the 1996-2006 conflict has had on education. In the 2007 UNESCO report *Education Under Attack,* O'Malley (7, 20-22) reports a litany of human rights abuses in the education sector in Nepal between 2002 and 2006 including abductions, threats, beatings, disappearances, and deaths involving both teachers and students.

- 324 teachers and 368 students were threatened.
- 10,261 teachers and 21, 998 students were abducted.
- 29 teachers and 126 students disappeared
- 734 teachers and 1,730 students were arrested and in some cases tortured.

Between 1996 and 2006 O'Malley (2007: 22) also reports that 145 teachers and 344 students were killed by either Maoist insurgents or soldiers in the Royal Nepalese Army.

The conflict situation has also affected the allocation of funding from external sources for educational initiatives in Nepal. Andersen (2007: 5) writes, "The world's richest donors, despite pledging to ensure every child receives an education by 2015, are selecting more stable countries [than Nepal] to receive aid for education." It seems that Andersen's assertion about perceived stability within the country by external donor and lending agencies affecting those countries' decisions to give aid to Nepal has merit. According to data published about Nepal by the World Bank, lending to Nepal fell dramatically from US $135 million in 2005 to US $4.5 million in 2006 when the April uprising occurred and the country was thrown into uncertainty. Commitments for loans in 2008, a year that holds promise for political stability, have soared to US $252.60 million.

In addition to effects on formal education, informal education can also be disrupted by conflict. Bush and Saltarelli (2000: 11) explain:

> As a community is forced into a survival mode, and as basic social and cultural institutions are challenged, the normal transmission of skills and knowledge from parents and community to children is often interrupted.

Many Nepalese fled the countryside during the conflict and migrated to the Kathmandu Valley. While I was visiting the Kathmandu Valley in June 2007, my Nepalese friend and I came across a group of women and children in an inner courtyard in Patan. Figure 3 shows a group of Nepalese who came to Patan in the Kathmandu Valley because of the conflict.

Figure 3. Internally Displaced Persons in Kathmandu Valley

According to a 2006 report regarding issued by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, it is estimated that between 100,000 and 250,000 people have been displaced in Nepal because of the conflict and that the majority of the those who have been displaced are women and children.

The data presented in this section contribute to the portrayal of Nepal as a country plagued by problems associated with poverty, conflict, and inequity. Nepalese citizens are currently experiencing political, cultural, social and economic crises because of these unresolved issues.

Current Socio-Political Context

In 1995, the Maoist insurgency began to stoke the fires of rebellion in rural areas in hopes of abolishing the monarchy and restoring the dissolved government. Ensuing strikes, protests and violence escalated, resulting in King Gyanendra seizing direct control of the country and declaring a state of emergency in an attempt to stop the Maoist rebels in April 2006, which is referred to as the April Uprising. Since then, the peace process has slowly begun. Many are skeptical of the peace accord signed in November 2006 between the Maoists and the government because previous attempts at peace have failed.

Indicative of the political disaccord in Nepal has been the inability of members of the interim government to schedule and hold elections for the Constituent Assembly which would be responsible for drafting a new constitution and deciding the political fate of Nepal. The Constituent Assembly elections were first scheduled for June 2007, but were cancelled due to the inability of the major political parties to agree on conditions for the elections. While I was visiting Nepal for my research in June 2007, the rescheduling of the elections was the dominant topic of conversation everywhere I went and was featured in headlines in the media. I felt like the entire country breathed a sigh of collective relief and anxiousness when the elections were rescheduled for November 22, 2007. Unfortunately, I won't forget the fateful words

of Mr. Surya Dhungel with whom I was meeting when news of the rescheduling reached us. When Mr. Mahadeo Yadav, former Attorney General of Nepal, arrived to join us for dinner and told us the elections had been rescheduled, Mr. Surya Dhungel exclaimed that the rejoicing would not last long and that he had little faith in the elections actually taking place in November due to the fighting between parties and the Maoist's demands for a republic. Mr. Surya Dhungel was right. The Maoists withdrew from the interim government on September 18, 2007 because they wanted the monarchy to be abolished and a republic declared prior to the Constituent Assembly elections, placing the peace process and elections in peril. Much discourse in the public sphere has taken place around issues of the monarchy, democracy, the role of Hinduism in the government, and ways to reconcile opposing forces. However, discourse alone is not enough to soothe the wounds of a nation torn apart by conflict. If the people see no action taken, desperate measures may be taken.

What could potentially be a greater conflict than the Maoist insurgency is taking shape in Nepal. Marginalized groups have become more vocal in demanding that their political rights and cultural heritage be recognized within Nepalese society. The Madhesi, or people whose origins are in the Terai region, make up 32 percent of the Nepalese population and represent diverse caste, ethnic, linguistic and religious groups (Pradhan 2005: 3). In January 2007 tensions erupted in the Terai in the form of killings, crippling *bandhs* [strikes], and curfews. Madhesis are fighting for citizenship which many have been denied to them due to their close proximity to India, equitable representation in the government, and freedom from widespread discrimination and oppression.

What happens when the people lose hope and see no better way for themselves or others in their country? This question is addressed by de Blij (2005) in his writings on global terrorism. He primarily addresses the upsurge in terrorist acts funded, planned, and executed by fervent supporters of Islam in the Middle East and Africa, but also explains how Muslim insurgency has unfolded and is affecting the regions and people of Europe, Asia, South America, and North America. De Blij (2005: 176-178) describes the conditions which allow Islamic terrorists to prosper as 1) failed or malfunctioning states 2) large, chaotic cities and 3) remote and rural environments. De Blij's characterization can be expanded to include other forms of terrorism, not just acts of violence which are inspired by Muslim fervor. For example, Nepal is a malfunctioning state which has both chaotic cities and remote areas which are difficult to reach. Moreover, terrorist activity has increased significantly in Nepal over the past decade as the Maoist rebels and National Royal Army have struggled to gain control of the country. Adhikari (2006: 1) explains that terrorist activity on both sides has occurred in the forms of abduction, extortion, recruiting of soldiers, forced labor and killing and that "at the heart of Nepal's problems are extreme inequities in wealth, power, and social status." In 2002 reports on human rights abuses estimated there were 36,389 victims (Adhikari 2003: 61).

Nepal provides an example of a country where inequity and despair have caused people to take matters into their own hands and to resort to violence as a way to force others to hear their pleas for change. The conflict situation in Nepal has had profound effects. Domination and terror in a society affect people of that nation

ontologically, at the very foundation of their being in the world. Nordstrom (1992: 261) posits:

> If culture grounds society, and society grounds the social construction of reality, then the disabilization of cultural frameworks simultaneously disabilizes the civilian population's sense of a viable reality and individual's ability to act, or at least to act with meaning and definition.

De Blij's assertions (2005: 195) that sociocultural transformation cannot be achieved by force and that democracy takes generations to mature are particularly relevant to the situation at hand in Nepal. Stiglitz (2006: 269-292) also argues that democratization of globalization and development is essential. New ways of understanding and approaching the issues Nepalese are facing today are critical to move beyond the current violence, instability, and distrust that have created an impasse for social change.

Nationalism and development have been a means to promote national unity in Nepal. Koirala (2005) and Whelpton (2005) address this issue in their works. Whelpton (2005: 173) explains that through national development, or *bikas*, the country aimed toward a society that no longer discriminated and exploited on the basis of class or caste. Koirala (2005: 11) explains that *bikas* "lay out the future and purpose of each child- to study hard, to become a professional, and to contribute toward the development and prosperity of Nepal." Despite efforts to increase development in Nepal, development efforts have not changed the everyday situation for many Nepalese who continue to live in poverty or fail to find work because of the high unemployment rate. The time for new narratives about development to emerge has come, and I approached these issues through conversations with research participants hoping that the sense of hopelessness stemming from failed attempts at

social change could be overcome and alternative approaches to issues of poverty, inadequate education, inequity, and sustainability would emerge.

This excerpt from the United States CIA World Factbook (2007) regarding the economic situation in Nepal reflects the dire prospects predicted for Nepal's economic future by this external agency:

> Prospects for foreign trade or investment in other sectors will remain poor, however, because of the small size of the economy, its technological backwardness, its remoteness, its landlocked geographic location, its civil strife, and its susceptibility to natural disaster.

With prospects for foreign investment and trade dismal, Nepal is caught in a cycle of poverty and dependence on humanitarian aid which does little to set the country and its people on the path of sustainability and self-sufficiency because the humanitarian resources coming into Nepal are allocated to provide for the basic needs of people in absolute poverty.

There are not enough human and financial resources currently available to invest in the critical development of education, democracy, and technology which could potentially set Nepal and its people on a different and better path. Moreover, people in Nepal are frustrated by the threat of violence to stifle editorial voices which seek to cover these critical issues with transparency. Journalists in Nepal decried the disruption of publication of two daily newspapers in June 2007 as a "mockery of democracy" when Maoist employees who worked for Kamana Publications House in Kathmandu were able to shut down the presses because leaders in the Maoist party felt that the press was hostile to them. (The Himalayan Times, June 23, 2007; Gaunle 2007: 1). Unfortunately, the climate of violence prevalent in Nepal coupled with

media censorship is undermining democratic efforts in Nepal and people's faith in its merits.

Another issue which is affecting people's faith in the democratic process is the inability of non-resident Nepalese to vote in upcoming elections unless they return to Nepal (The Himalayan Time, June 25, 2007). This issue was of critical concern to the research participants involved in this project because their voices will not be recognized in the political process. Moreover, the absence of youth in politics is spurring dialogue in the public sphere. Tiwari (2008) writes, "Two out of three Nepalis you meet on the street are younger than 30. But three out of three politicians you see on television are nearly 60 or older." He explains further that politicians do not talk about the future in terms of the youth because they send their own children abroad for education and expect rural youth to work in foreign countries.

Summary

In this chapter, an overview of the modern history of Nepal, important demographic information, and a description of the current socio-political context were presented. This chapter helps set a context for Chapter Three in which literature relevant to the topic at hand is reviewed.

CHAPTER III: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The literature which is covered in this chapter has been chosen because of its relevance to the topic at hand. First, a review of literature relating to international students in higher education is presented. Next, a review of the literature as it relates to development is described. Finally, select literature relating to the research categories of identity, solicitude and imagination within a critical hermeneutic framework is presented.

Internationalization of American Higher Education

While an interpretive approach to the research subject was taken for this project, a brief look at the existing literature that has informed the field of international education is important. Indeed, research concerning international students in higher education approaches the issue from different perspectives.

Trends and Demographics

The globalization of higher education is not a new phenomenon. In fact, universities around the world originated from one region, and the influence of that one region spread around the globe through the promulgation of educational systems mirrored in its own image. Altbach (2004a: 4) reminds readers that "all of the universities in the world today, with the exception of the Al-Azhar in Cairo, stem from the same historical roots- the medieval European university." In recent times, the focus of globalization has turned to the participants in international education. A significant body of literature exists that seeks to describe who is studying in a foreign country, where they are studying, what they are studying, and who is paying for those

studies. The Institute of International Education has been collecting data on international students since 1948 and providing that information in its annual publication *Open Doors*. The 2007 *Open Doors* report states that in the 2006-2007 academic year there were 582,984 international students enrolled in American universities and colleges. The leading countries of origin were India with 83,833 students followed by China with 62,392 students. Universities and colleges in California, New York and Texas experienced the largest enrollments of international students. The most popular fields of study for international students were business and management with 18 percent of all international students choosing this course of study, followed by 15 percent of the total in engineering, 9 percent in physical and life sciences, and 8 percent in both social sciences and mathematics as well as computer sciences. These statistics clearly show that international students come to the United States to pursue degrees in the sciences.

The descriptive data in *Open Doors* is used by researchers and administrators within institutions of higher education to look at changing trends in international student populations in the United States. While this data can be useful in contributing to the big picture of international education, the data presented in *Open Doors* is purely descriptive and does not attempt to explain changes in trends, understand the influence these trends have on sending and host countries, or treat the international students themselves as more than data.

Globalization of higher education is often discussed in terms of student mobility across borders and the role of markets and states in that flow of students (Altbach 2004b; Marginson and Rhoades 2002; Steier 2003). Chen and Barnett

(2000) studied international student flows from a macro-perspective in 1985, 1989, and 1995. They analyzed the political and economic impact of international student exchange by viewing student flows as a form of communication between core (developed) and peripheral (developing) countries. They found that international student flows and economic development are closely tied together. Chen and Barnett's conclusion (2000: 452) was:

> Due to greater opportunities for academic careers in advanced countries, large portions of international students, who have the potential of producing innovations to alter the world's uneven distribution of wealth, may be recruited into the core. Thus, international student exchange may not be the catalyst for accelerating political and economic development for peripheral countries, but may in fact reinforce the inequitable distribution of wealth and technology.

Their assertion has important implications for a country such as Nepal where an increasing number of students in higher education are going abroad at a time when the future of the country depends, in part, on the knowledge, skills and new understandings these students can bring to efforts for social, political and economic transformations in their native country.

The United States prides itself on its position in global political and economic contexts, but what is the status of the internationalization of higher education in the United States? A report published in 2000 by the American Council of Education attempts to evaluate the state of the internationalization of American higher education by focusing on several areas of inquiry. These areas include 1) international students and faculty, 2) the incorporation of international elements into curricula across disciplines, 3) enrollment in foreign language courses and foreign language competency, 4) international education requirements, 5) international awareness, 6)

study abroad opportunities for American students, and 7) funding for international education. The report decries the scarcity and obsoleteness of data pertaining to these categories. The data which were available unveiled a dreary picture, and the report's conclusion has an ominous quality to it. The report (American Council on Education 2000: 29-30) states in its findings, "Most college graduates are unprepared for either the rigors of international competitiveness or roles as informed citizens in a highly unpredictable world." The report continues with this conjecture:

> We run the risk of being out of touch with major social, political, and economical revolutions already underway in many parts of the world. If we fail to become effective global citizens, we may cease to be major players at all.

Moreover, the glaring absence of research dedicated to international students in higher education in works such as *American Higher education in the Twenty-first Century: Social, Political, and Economic Challenges* (Altbach, Berdahl, and Gumport, eds. 1999) and *Higher Learning in America 1980-2000* (Levine, ed. 1993) are further attestations to the lack of significance ascribed to international students in higher education in the United States.

International education is important in an increasingly complex and interdependent world, but there is a paucity of literature on the subject that seeks to truly understand the participants in globalized higher education. The research compiled by Flaitz et al. (2003) is an attempt to better inform educators in the United States about certain international students. Each chapter in their work presents a brief overview of selected countries and important cultural, educational, and linguistic information about each country. While this is an indication that educational organizations may indeed recognize a need to better understand its international

students, the information presented is superficial and promotes stereotypes. Research is needed that authentically engages international students in the research process.

English is the new Latin of the 21st century; consequently, English-speaking countries are the preferred destinations for international students. According to 2004-2006 data, the United States is the leading destination for international students with 564,766 students, followed by the United Kingdom with 234,350 students, Australia with 172,297 students, Canada with 140,724 students, and New Zealand with 42,652 students (Australian Education International 2007). Colleges and universities in the United States which rest on their laurels when it comes to the internationalization of higher education run the risk of becoming irrelevant because globalized higher education has become increasingly competitive in the global marketplace. International students contribute significantly to local economies. Moreover, international students must pay higher tuition rates than students from the host country which makes them very attractive to host institutions. Altbach (2004a: 24), a leading scholar in international higher education, captures the state of international higher education in the United States when he writes:

> The United States faces significant competition in the rapidly expanding world of international study. Competitors have several major advantages. They have national policies relating to international study and cross-border higher education initiatives. They have been setting goals, putting policies into place, and giving incentives to academic institutions to attract foreign students. The United States, in contrast, has never had a national approach to higher education, and the federal government has provided scant support for it. Now, whatever national policies do exist are negative- significant barriers have been erected in the name of national security that make it more difficult for foreign students and scholars to come to the United States.

In a country forever transformed by the events of 9/11, American national security has become another obstacle which international students must overcome in order to

study in the United States as they vie for student visas. Once they receive a visa to study in the United States, international students must continue to contend with national security after their arrival as their status is monitored by the institution that issued their I-20 and reported to the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS).

Academic Performance and Adjustment Issues for International Students

Another body of literature concerning international students attempts to measure international student's academic performance. Not surprisingly, Stoynoff (1997: 60-62) found that increased language proficiency and support from peers or professors contributed to successful academic performance for international students in institutions of higher education in the United States. Abel (2002: 18) concludes that international students who are academically successful show initiative to learn, have good time management skills, get outside help when deemed necessary, and choose classes that encourage participation.

Academic performance is not the only indicator of how good or how difficult the experience is for international students in higher education. The time spent abroad for studies can be lonely, alienating, and frustrating. On the other hand, this time can also be highly fulfilling and rewarding for international students. In consideration of this, the adjustment process for international students has also been studied. Rajapaksa and Dundes (2002: 24) studied social networks and concluded that "those who were satisfied with their social network clearly were more likely to be content and less likely to feel lonely, or like they had left part of themselves at home." The number of friends international students reported in their social networks was

found to be more important than close relationships. Moreover, Hechanova-Alampay et al. (2002: 470) investigated the cross-cultural adjustment process for both domestic and international students. They discovered that social support did not predict adjustment or strain in the six month period after arrival, but that international students who reported more interactions with host nationals experienced greater adjustment and less strain. Hechanova-Alampay et al. (2002: 471) also found that international students who reported a high sense of confidence in their abilities experienced less strain and greater adjustment. These studies show that interpersonal relationships and self-esteem are an integral part of the international students' perception that the study abroad experience is meaningful.

Changes in identity formation as it occurs in cross-cultural situations were explored by Crawshaw, Callen and Tusting (2001: 101-113). These researchers used student diaries for their data which they analyzed through a critical hermeneutic lens. This qualitative approach to the data allowed the voices of the international student participants to be heard. In their analysis they concluded that creative writing should play a more critical role in higher education courses as a means for students to explore the self in relation to other during a period of residence abroad and that literature be used in higher education courses as a medium for conversation and interpretation that encourages international students to explore their intercultural experience.

Studying in a rural environment poses different challenges and adjustment issues than international students in urban environments experience. Kher, Juneau, and Molstad (2003) tell the story of a Mauritian student and the difficulties he

experienced after he arrived in the United States to study at a small southern university. These authors recognize the unique challenges an international student studying in a rural area faces such as limited access to public transportation, lack of knowledge of the geography and dimensions of the region, and no social network or administrative support from the university upon their arrival. This case study of the Mauritian students describes the intercultural experiences from a personal and individual perspective, but the ethical implications of their research are meaningful in a broader context. No other research addressing the situation for international students in rural settings was available and indicates a gap in the existing literature. As was stated in the introduction, an increasing number of international students are enrolling in institutions of higher education in the United States outside of urban areas because tuition rates are more affordable as is the cost of living. International students who develop their own informal support networks within the community of fellow international students at these institutions is an area of research that has yet to be explored.

No research was found that explores the experiences Nepalese students in higher education in the United States. The fact that the phenomenon of increased Nepalese student enrollment in American universities and colleges is very recent could explain why there is no literature that focuses on this student population in the United States.

Development

Having presented a brief overview of select issues in international education through existing literature, a description of development will be presented in the

following section of the review of literature. Its relevance to the Nepalese context will be the focus of the review. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to provide a thorough history of development studies, which has become a rich interdisciplinary field of study.

Remembering Development

Development is a term we hear and see so often that a critical exploration into what development means is necessary. It is important to begin with an overview of development at the beginning of the second half of the 20th century when the downfall of colonialism, the need to rebuild Europe, increased global interdependence, and the beginning of the Cold War occurred. Escobar (1994: 3-4) describes how development was understood at the end of World War II. He writes:

> The intent [of development] was quite obvious: to bring about the conditions necessary to replicating the world over the features that characterized the 'advanced' societies of the time- high levels of industrialization and urbanization, technicalization of agriculture, rapid growth of material production and living standards, and the widespread adoption of modern education and cultural values.

The intersection of economic, social and political objectives set the stage for changes in how poverty and progress were understood by politicians, policy-makers and civilians around the world.

Where did these ideas about development come from? Why had development become an international endeavor, with industrialized nations becoming the model for the rest of the world? Rist (1997: 71-79) writes that the invention of development in the international context began with Point Four of President Truman's inauguration speech in January 1949. Truman (in Rist 1997: 71) said:

> Fourth, we must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas. More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery . . . Their poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas.

This came to be known internationally as the United States Point Four Program. With this speech, President Truman set the precedent for development programs which separated the people of the world into what Easterly (2006) calls "the West" and "the Rest". Easterly (2006: 24) comments on how a shift in language and thought during the period following World War II reinvented old ideas with new language when he writes, "The West exchanged the old racist coinage for a new currency. 'Uncivilized' became 'underdeveloped.' 'Savage peoples' became the 'third world.'" With the advent of development economics, hegemonic discourse shifted from race to economic well-being measured by Western standards.

Individual governments have played a key role in the development industry. Western countries have not been motivated by altruism and idealism alone in their quest to bring development to the rest of the world. Yergin and Stanislaw (1998: 57) write, "The competition with communism made the American and other Western governments eager to embrace a noncommunist path to development, one that would lead to stability." Development projects were pursued by Western countries such as the United States during the Cold War as a means to nurture goodwill in countries where citizens living in poverty could also be swayed by communism.

Who did development as envisioned by Truman truly benefit? Rist (1997: 79-83) explains that defining development in terms of economics benefited the world's most powerful nations and justified their efforts to map out development strategies

and plans for the impoverished people of the world. Colossal organizations emerged to support the global development mission. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has played a role in global development since 1961 when the United States Congress passed the Foreign Assistance Act during President Kennedy's administration. In addition to individual governments, international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund which was conceived of in 1945 and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development created in 1945, which later became the World Bank, are organizations which have shaped global development policy. The United Nations which came into being in 1945 has also guided development policy as an intergovernmental organization through the United Nations Development Program. Other organizations which cannot be overlooked are the World Health Organization, the Asian Development Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the World Trade Organization. In addition, countless non-governmental organizations in civil society have been created in the name of development. While social, political, and cultural issues have been of concern to these organizations and their missions, economics arises as a major theme interwoven in the myriad of development narratives that have emerged in the global discourse.

Strategizing and policy-making in the quest for globalized development continued into the 21st century. The United Nations Millennium Declaration was signed by members of the United Nations in 2000, resulting in the Millennium Development Goals. The ambitious Millennium Development Goals are to 1) eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, 2) achieve universal primary education, 3)

promote gender equality and empower women, 4) reduce child mortality, 5) improve maternal health, 6) combat HIV, Aids, malaria and other diseases, 7) ensure environmental sustainability, and 8) develop a global partnership for development. Each goal is further defined in terms of specific targets, and the timeline for the completion of these goals is 2015. Progress each country is making in relation to the Millennium Development Goals is monitored by the UN. I first learned of the Millennium Development Goals in the summer of 2002 while working with international graduate students enrolled in a two-year International Development program at the International University of Japan. I taught students from Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, China, Burma, Indonesia, Thailand, and Mongolia whose graduate studies were funded by the International Monetary Fund as well as the Japan International Cooperation Agency. Directors of the graduate program were asked by representatives from the IMF to incorporate the Millennium Development Goals into the curriculum. When the international graduate students accepted their scholarships and agreed to study in Japan, they also agreed to return to their country of origin and to work for a certain number of years, most often for their governments in positions where they would support development.

Support for the Millennium Development Goals has been garnered with the support of pop culture icons such as U2's Bono who wrote the foreword for the bestselling book *The End of Poverty* written by economist and UN advisor Jeffrey Sachs. Sachs (2005: 56-61, 365) argues that poor countries are caught in a poverty trap and that specific, quantified benchmarks such as the Millennium Development Goals make development achievable. When I returned to the International University

of Japan in 2005, we were asked by IMF representatives to integrate *The End of Poverty* into the curriculum for graduate students in the International Development program. The approach to development advocated by Sachs focuses heavily on creating a master plan to address issues of poverty and development around the world. However, this approach doesn't do enough to recognize, engage, and turn to for their local knowledge and expertise the community members and individuals who live the development experience at the local level in cities and villages around the world.

Joseph Stiglitz, winner of the Nobel Prize in economics, served on the Council of Economic Advisers during the Clinton administration and then worked for the World Bank from 1997 to 2000. Stiglitz (2002: 25) is very critical of globalization and development programs as they are carried out in many instances because of bureaucratic mismanagement. He is especially critical of the bureaucratic nature of the IMF and the unwillingness of officials within that organization to engage in authentic dialogue about the issues at hand and to come to new understandings with implications for policy making and program implementation in developing countries. He writes, "I never dreamed that one of the major obstacles the developing countries faced was man-made, totally unnecessary, and lay right across the street- at my 'sister' institution, the IMF."

Development and progress approached as economic enterprises have not resulted in improving the lives of billions around the globe. On the contrary, de Rivero (2001: 142-143) considers this approach as predatory and that it is promoting social exclusion to disastrous results. He writes:

> A human group that is permanently excluded from the bare necessities of existence, preyed on by the market and by modernity, will finally turn upon its predators, resorting to varied forms of treatment ranging from delinquency to terrorist fanaticism.

De Rivero's analysis is relevant to the situation at hand in Nepal. In the following section, literature is reviewed about development in Nepal, thereby providing a context to explore how development programs have been conceptualized and implemented and what the results of these programs have been.

Development in Nepal: A Context for Critique

Foreign aid and development plans began to flow into Nepal within two years of President Truman's inaugural speech. On January 23, 1951 Nepal signed an agreement to accept assistance under the United States Point Four Program (Whelpton 2005: 128). The quest for development in Nepal from 1951 to 1991 began as an attempt to raise the standard of living for ordinary Nepalese people. These attempts reflected President Truman's call for the United States to share its modern expertise with the underdeveloped world. Development programs aimed to improve conditions through poverty reduction, building up Nepal's infrastructure, increasing access to health care and education, and attempting to bolster the national economy.

The government of Nepal is heavily dependent on foreign aid. It has obtained aid through a myriad of sources to fund development objectives. For the 2006-2007 fiscal year, 23.6 percent of the government's budget came from foreign aid in the form of loans and grants (Three-Year Interim Plan National Planning Commission 2007: 29-30). An estimated US $5.2 billion in foreign aid was invested in development between 1950 and 2000 (Whelpton 2005: 128).

In addition to being a means to carry our development projects, foreign aid in Nepal must also be considered as an instrument in foreign policy during the Cold War (Khadka 1997), especially given Nepal's geographic location between China and India (Khadka 1992). Major bilateral donors of foreign aid have included the United States, the United Kingdom, the former Soviet Union, China, and India. More recently Japan, Switzerland, Australia and New Zealand have become bilateral donors, but the bulk of foreign aid has come from multilateral agencies in the last two decades. Khadka (1997: 1058) explains that foreign aid has been given with an increasing number of strings attached by donor countries and multilateral agencies. "One of the economic implications of greater dependence on aid is Nepal's obligation to provide matching funds for local costs . . . thus restricts more judicious use of domestic resources." Another contingency is that Nepal must accept foreign consultants along with the aid they receive. Khadka (1997: 1058) continues, "As much as 30 percent of the aid budget is used to foreign consultants hired as a condition of the aid." An issue of critical importance is whether or not Nepal is able to maintain its autonomy given its dependence on foreign aid and the conditions imposed by donor countries and agencies that accompany foreign aid.

Development in Nepal is a complex industry that needs to be managed. A series of five-year plans was created by the National Planning Commission of the Government of Nepal to direct the development process. The First Plan was launched in 1956, and when the Tenth Plan came to its conclusion in 2007 the current Three-Year Interim Plan was put into effect while the Nepalese state goes through a restructuring period. While the Nepalese government has attempted to direct the

development process at the national level, the volume and diversity of the sources of foreign aid needed to be coordinated. In 1976 the Nepal Aid Group was formed to coordinate development policy and the distribution of aid. This group later became known as the Nepal Development Forum. The need for a coordinating agency was identified because of problems in the existing aid process. Whelpton (2005: 136) describes these flaws as such:

> In the early days, the Nepalese government encouraged rivalry between donors rather than an integrated approach, believing that was the best way to maximize both total receipts and its own freedom of action . . . More seriously, the aid bureaucracies often focused more on spending their budget rather than ensuring that projects met local needs and were sustainable over the long term.

The most recent Nepal Development Forum meeting was held in 2004 in Kathmandu and two of the key objectives were to discuss ways to increase aid effectiveness as well as donor participation in aid programs.

Development may be a Western nomenclature, but the spirit of improving one's life and the lives of others is inherent in traditional Nepalese culture and religious heritage. Messerschmidt and Yadama (2004) underscore the historical and cultural importance of traditional civic service and volunteerism in Nepal. Mutual and self-help groups, philanthropic service groups, campaign advocacy groups, and participatory self-governance groups form the foundation of this tradition. Messerschmidt and Yadama (2004: 105S) explain:

> A tradition of voluntarily serving others has deep and broad roots in Nepal. Neither the government nor the military sponsors them, and few of them involve any reward or incentive other than the self-esteem and satisfaction that comes from performing one's civic duty (*dharma*).

In 1971 the National Development Service was founded, building on the tradition of civic service in Nepal. Graduate students were required to spend one year in a rural community engaged in service related to their studies. Messerschmidt, Yadama and Silwal (2007: 10) explain that the objective of the program was to engage and train Nepalese in national development and nation building. Due to political conflict the program was suspended in 1979, but was successful in engaging Nepalese citizens in the development process and creating a civic space in society which was "rapidly filled with community-based organizations at the local level, and various group-based federations, networks, NGOs and social movements at local, regional, and national levels," (Messerschmidt, Yadama, and Silwal 2007: 2).

Development in Nepal has not been without its domestic critics. Shrestha (1998: 82) harshly criticizes the arrival of development, or *bikas*, because it changed people's understanding of poverty in such a way that it unraveled the social fabric. He writes:

> Prior to the *bikas* wave, poverty was normally viewed as a communal and collective problem rather than as an individual family problem . . . But now development, as defined and measured in materialistic (capitalistic) terms using indicators such as per capita income, energy consumption, resource use, and literacy, individualized poverty, meaning that the poor were generally viewed as *abikasis*, as cases of personal deficiency or self-inflicted failures.

Dahal (2001: 22) explains how the Hindu understanding of duty "embedded individuals in a web of moral and social duties and relationships." With the introduction of a Western interpretation of duty, community members no longer worked and lived in caring relationship with one another and the blame of poverty was then placed on individuals. As a result, local means of coping with poverty

shifted to the state, national and international levels and "the process of development victimization," by developed nations began (Shrestha 1998: 75-102).

Despite the enormous fiscal investment in development in Nepal, the results of these efforts have been questionable. In Nepal, 31 percent of the overall population continues to live in absolute poverty. Cultural and religious discrimination continues to negatively affect the least advantaged in Nepalese society. For the untouchables and hill nationalities the percentage of people living in absolute poverty increases to 44 percent, and 41 percent of Muslims in Nepal suffer the same fate (Three-Year Interim Plan National Planning Commission 2007: 16).

Development in Nepal has not fulfilled the promises made to those suffering in poverty. Whelpton (2005: 137) writes "the economic record of 1951-1990 may be dismissed simply as failed development", with some exceptions taken into account for progress made in raising the literacy rate and increasing life expectancy. However, even these achievements have complicated the development issue in Nepal. The increase in life expectancy and an annual population growth rate of 2.25 percent as of 2006-2007 means that Nepal's current population of nearly 28 million will double by the year 2037 if this growth rate continues (Three-Year Interim Plan National Planning Commission 2007: 8). With Nepal already struggling to increase the living standard and well-being of its current citizens, a need to re-imagine development is crucial.

Re-Imaging Development

A search for new possibilities in development is underway as researchers, field workers, and recipients of development in all corners of the globe have come to recognize that approaches to development in the 20th century based on "the binary, the mechanistic, the reductionist, the inhumane, and the ultimately self-destructive" have overwhelmingly failed (Rahnema 1997:391). Alternative understandings of development are being explored (Dahal 2001; Easterly 2006; Escobar 1995; Rist 1997; Sen 1999; Stiglitz 2006) and economic progress is no longer dominating development discourses.

A common theme in re-imaging development is that the people who have been targeted for development need to be meaningfully engaged in the development process. Easterly (2006: 380) argues that one of the reasons foreign aid intervention and plans for development fail has been "the lack of *feedback* from the poor themselves, and *accountability* to these same poor." When policy-makers are not working in relationship with community members to determine what is needed, and no assessments that include the participants are used to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of a program, then failure seems imminent. In addressing ways to overcome the historical shortcomings of development, Rist (1997: 244) writes, "All that matters is that each society should regain the right to organize its existence as it sees fit . . . encouraging creativity and ensuring that decisions are taken by those directly concerned."

In Nepal, a recognition that participation is vital in creating the conditions for development to succeed on their own terms is taking root. Dahal (2001: 87) explains:

> Only context-sensitive policies formulated by stakeholders bear the potential for large-scale participation . . . It can be seen in such areas as conducting local dialogues, raising awareness among the citizens through social communication, mobilizing local citizens for priority setting and program execution, organizing users or consumers into groups for demanding and utilizing services, adopting an integrated approach in service delivery, and encouraging local voluntary works.

An example of a successful development project in Nepal is an adult literacy program that was conceived of and launched in the remote district of Jajarkot District between 1991 and 1996. Subasi and Kehrberg (1998: 581-582) attribute the success of the program to the community's involvement in analyzing their own situation, deciding what their needs were, and community members and program leaders working in relationship with one another to bring about change. In this example, the community members directed their own social transformation. Sen (1999: 10-11) argues that "with adequate social opportunities, individuals can effectively shape their own destiny and help each other." Sen argues that political freedoms, economic facilities, transparency guarantees and protective security along with social opportunities are interrelated freedoms which are both the means and ends of development.

Development understood as an interpretive act opens up new possibilities of being in the world through authentic conversation. The spring 2007 volume of *The Applied Anthropologist* is dedicated to anthropological field work in development informed by critical hermeneutics. In the introduction Herda (2007:18) writes:

> Put another way, as development practitioners, we invoke the mode of the "kingdom of as if" (Ricoeur 1984: 64), calling upon the power of "us" and "them" to project a world through narrative configuration that enables each to know who we are in relationship to the other. On the basis of such relationships, we work toward the creation of projects and policies which when carried out will give people enough hope to live "as if" it is a worthwhile life.

As was shown through a review of literature, the development paradigm established in the second half of the 20th century failed to improve the lives of those who lived in poverty as was promised in development discourse. Critical hermeneutics provides a framework through which development can be approached in a more human and ethical way.

Critical Hermeneutics

Critical hermeneutics brings together hermeneutic philosophy and critical theory. Thompson (1981: 216) writes, "This contribution seeks to sketch the contours of a critical and rationally justified theory for the interpretation of action, a project which I have provisionally called 'critical hermeneutics'." Central themes within critical hermeneutic theory which are relevant to the topic at hand are described in the following section, drawing from the literature of Paul Ricoeur, Richard Kearney, Jürgen Habermas, and Martin Heidegger.

Identity

The concept of identity as a central theme in critical hermeneutics has been explored extensively by Paul Ricoeur. Ricoeur (1988: 246) conceptualizes identity as *idem*, understood as being the same, and *ipse*, understood as being oneself as self-same. *Ipse* identity, while including self-constancy, also permits change to occur within a lifetime. This understanding of identity is what allows Ricoeur to present the idea of narrative identity.

Ricoeur (1992: 140-168) posits that narrative is where we will find the answers to questions about identity because it is in the interpretation of life events that we imagine and create our identity, hence his development of narrative identity

as an alternative understanding of identity. The seemingly disconcordant events of one's life gain coherence, or concordance, in the telling of a story. The idea that life events and one's identity can be constructed is liberating and potentially transformative on both an individual and social level. If we are able to reflect and look at ourselves as characters in a story, new understandings about who we are can be explored. Ricoeur (1998: 247) writes:

> The notion of narrative identity also indicates its fruitfulness in that it can be applied to a community as well as to an individual. We can speak of the self-constancy of community, just as we spoke of it as applied to an individual. Individual and community are constituted in their identity by taking up narratives that become for them their actual history.

A collective recognition that certain narratives have failed and a critique of those narratives by individuals engaged in discourse in the public sphere are in order for a community such as Nepal to change.

Narrative identity in the social or collective sense is further explored by Kearney. He (2003: 79-80) writes, "Narrative identity which sustains some notion of selfhood over the passage of time, can serve as a guarantor for one's fidelity to the other. How is one to be faithful to the other, after all, if there is no *self* to be faithful?" Bound in relationship with the other, ethics requires us to recognize the other as an individual who has universal rights and responsibilities. Narrative identity, therefore, is not only subjective. It is also intersubjective. Kearney (1998: 248) proposes:

> The self acquires its identity in large part by receiving others' narratives and re-narrating itself in turn to others. Self-identity involves one projecting a narrative on to a world of which one is both a creative agent and a receptive actor.

Approaching identity as a creative process mediated through language liberates individuals to explore alternative possibilities of being, but at the same time by being in relationship with others these same individuals must consider the ethical implications of those possibilities. Ricoeur (1992: 195) writes of the power-in-common experienced by a historical community, as opposed to domination or power-over others. The dialectical tension between power-in-common and power-over is particularly relevant to the situation at hand in Nepal where political instability has fueled this tension.

Habermas (1973: 3-4) discusses identity in the context of social systems and crises. In times of crises, social identities are threatened. He writes:

> Members of a system use [interpretations] in identifying one another as belonging to the same group, and through this group assert their own self-identity. In historiography, a rupture in tradition, through which the interpretive systems that guarantee identity lose their social integrative power, serves as an indicator of the collapse of social systems.

The communication and transmission of traditions from predecessors, to contemporaries, and to successors is disrupted, thus threatening collective identities. Habermas (1973: 4) continues, "From this perspective, a social system has lost its identity as soon as later generations no longer recognize themselves within the once-constitutive tradition." When there are disturbances in the domains of cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization, then crises are experienced in culture, in society and on a personal level (Habermas 1989: 176-181). In the 21st century societies are facing incredible pressure from external social, cultural, political and economic systems as interactions between regions have increased. Consequently, it is important to include in the discourse of identities that of social systems.

Moving from identity in social systems to that of political systems, the work of Barash (1999) establishes an understanding of political identity grounded in critical hermeneutic theory. He raises the ethico-politcal question (1999: 38), "In what manner does the cohesiveness of purposeful life in common depend on – indeed, *should* it depend on – a long common experience rooted in memory?" He argues that collective identity is configured over time and that collective memory brings forth cohesion. However, there is a danger in reducing "the complex socio-political systems of modern states to identical explanatory types, while ignoring the profound temporal dimension through which the particularities intrinsic to their respective identities have emerged," (Barash 1999: 42). Therefore, *phronēsis*, or practical wisdom, is necessary in understanding the particular system or situation at hand.

Identity is a concept which becomes important to international students as they leave their native land and live abroad for their studies. Turner's anthropological work (1989: 94) on liminality and rites of passage can contribute to an understanding of identity even though his work did not deal with international students. He states that there are three phases in the transitional process; these are separation, margin, and aggregation. The marginal, or liminal, state is comparable to that of international students after their arrival in the host country as they try to orient themselves toward new understandings of the world and their inter-cultural identity. Turner (1989: 99) discusses the positive aspects of liminality, which are particularly meaningful when considered in relation to the experiences of international students. He writes, "Undoing, dissolution, decomposition are accompanied by processes of growth, transformation, and the reformulation of old elements in new patterns." The

configuration or re-understanding of one's being through narrative, where memory and imagination came together in the present moment, emerged in the research conversation I had with research participants.

Who we are in the world is always understood through our relationships with others. The literature presented in the following section explores the critical hermeneutic understanding of solicitude as present in our relationships with others.

Solicitude

In his work *Being and Time* Martin Heidegger (1962: 26-27) inquires into the theory of the meaning of being. The term *Dasein*, meaning being-in-the-world, is central to his philosophy. Being-in-the-world is always being-with-others, and a fundamental essence of this relationship is understanding. Heidegger (1962: 237) writes, "Being-in-the-world is essentially care . . . and Being with the Dasein-with of Others as we encounter it within-the-world could be taken as solicitude." The shared world must be interpreted in terms of the phenomenon of caring for others through solicitude.

Heidegger (1967: 158-159) explores this concept further, in which he presents two extreme possibilities of solicitude. One possibility of solicitude he describes is this:

> It [solicitude] can, as it were, take away 'care' from the Other and put itself in his position in concern: it can *leap* in for him. This kind of solicitude takes over for the Other that with which he is to concern himself . . . In such solicitude the Other can become one who is dominated and dependent, even if this domination is a tacit one and remains hidden from him.

Going back to the discourse and practices of development, the possibility of solicitude as described by Heidegger in the preceding passage is poignant. How

many development programs have aimed to do good things for the Other, ultimately putting the Other in a position of dependency? However, another possibility of solicitude that Heidegger presents is one which liberates the Other. Heidegger (1967: 159) writes:

> There is also the possibility of a kind of solicitude which does not so much leap in for the other as *leap ahead* of him [*ihm vorausspringt*] in his existentiell potentiality-for-Being, not in order to take away his 'care' but rather to give it back to him authentically as such for the first time.

When approaching solicitude with this understanding, solicitude for the other opens up new possibilities of being in the world for the Other, that "potentiality-for-Being" that sets the Other free rather than subjecting the Other. Because temporality is inherent in this consideration of solicitude, there is a future orientation of care for others.

What bridges the internal reflexivity of self-esteem and the orientation toward others inherent in solicitude? Friendship serves as a transition between the aim of the "good life" which is reflected in self-esteem, apparently a solitary virtue, and justice, the virtue of human plurality belonging to the political sphere. However, not all friendships are the same. Some friendships are utilitarian, some based on pleasure, and others are virtuous. Ethical actions and concern for the other are inherent aspects of virtuous friendship. Ricoeur (1992: 183-188, 193) writes of reciprocity and mutuality in this context of friendship, as well as equality.

Ricoeur also introduces the notion of similitude, which is based on the ideas of the reversibility of roles between self and other and the nonsubstitutability of persons. Ricoeur (1992: 193) elaborates on the concept of solicitude when he writes, "Similitude is the fruit of the exchange between esteem for oneself and solicitude for

others." In essence, this means that unless I have esteem for others, I cannot have esteem for myself. Another aspect of Ricoeur's understanding of solicitude that must be considered is the distinction he makes between solicitude and feeling bound by duty to care for others. Ricoeur (1992: 190) writes, "It is so important for us to give solicitude a more fundamental status than obedience to duty. Its status is that of *benevolent spontaneity,* intimately related to self-esteem within the framework of the aim of the 'good' life." In our search for the "good" life, our actions are guided by solicitude in our relationships with others. But, for us to be able to be able to act in an ethical way, we must be able to imagine differently.

Imagination

The understanding of narratives not only has the possibility to transform one's understanding of self, it also has the potential to transform one's actions as well. Imagination is inherent in the process of interpretation and in the creation of texts. Kearney addresses the transformative power of imagination in *The Poetics of Imagining* when he writes (1998: 149):

> The hermeneutic imagination is not confined, however, to circles of *interpretation.* By projecting new worlds it also provides us with projects of *action* . . . The metaphors, symbols, or narratives produced by imagination all provide us with 'imaginative variations' of the world, thereby offering us the freedom to conceive of the world in other ways and to undertake forms of action which might lead to its transformation.

When we can imagine a different or better world because of reading a text, we may be more apt to change our actions to bring us one step closer to that proposed world. Kearney brings Ricoeur's hermeneutics into the realm of action.

Within a critical hermeneutic framework, action must be guided by practical wisdom because no action is neutral and certain actions are always better than others.

Ricoeur (1992: 241) explains practical wisdom as "that point at which moral judgment in situation and the conviction that dwells in it are worthy of the name *practical wisdom*." What is important to note in Ricoeur's interpretation is that of the wisdom of judgment when faced with the particularity of the situation at hand, which requires individuals to consider the given context rather than making judgments based on universal ethics.

Imagination is not limited to the individual. What is the social imagination? It is the collective stories, beliefs, and values a group of people share that guide social and political action. The social imagination is introduced by Ricoeur (1991) in his book *From Text to Action* and is elaborated on by Kearney (2004: 7) who writes, "While ideology tends to promote collective images which integrate a community around a shared identity, utopian images work in the opposite direction of novelty, rupture and discontinuity." It is through hermeneutics that we can interpret and judge the social imagination and bring forth change. The critique of the social imagination by Nepalese everywhere will be necessary to take action that leads to a better future for Nepal and its people.

Where imagination is oriented toward the future, memory is our interpretation and understanding of the past. On a communal level of identity, competing narratives about the past can lead to conflict and even violence. Ricoeur (1999a: 13) writes:

> By acknowledging that the history of an event involves a conflict of several interpretations and memories, we in turn open up the future, and this retrieval-projection of history has ethical and political implications . . . So we have to connect past and future in an exchange between memory and expectation.

The way in which memory of the past and expectations of the future can be connected is through personal testimony. As witnesses to events have the opportunity to tell

their stories through testimony, they "deploy the capacity of the imagination to place the events before our eyes, as if we were there," (Ricoeur 1999a: 16). Through the expressive function of language, members of society can work toward forgiveness, toward forgetting when necessary, and toward remembering those who have suffered. This is how the "unfulfilled potential of the past" comes into being (Ricoeur 1999a: 14-17; Ricoeur 1999b: 8-10). As Nepal attempts to move forward in the peace process, conflicting narratives about what happened during the Maoist insurgency are entering the public sphere. For example, Nepalese want to know what happened to those who disappeared during the insurgency and uncovering what happened is not going to come without struggle. Ricoeur's interwoven concepts of imagination, testimony, and memory can be used to better understand the situation at hand in Nepal.

Summary

In Chapters Two a review of literature relevant to the Nepal was presented including a brief history of modern Nepal, a demographic perspective of Nepalese society, and an overview of the current political, social, and economic context in Nepal. In Chapter Three a review of the relevant literature relating to international education, development, and the critical hermeneutic notions of identity, solicitude, and imagination was presented. The review of literature in Chapter Two and Chapter Three provides a context for this research. In the proceeding chapter, the research protocol is described within a critical hermeneutic framework.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH PROTOCOL

Introduction

In Chapter Four, I describe the research protocol that was carried out within the context of a participatory research paradigm that was informed by critical hermeneutic theory as described by Herda (1999: 86) who writes:

> In field-based hermeneutic research, the object is to create collaboratively a text that allows us to carry out the integrative act of reading, interpreting and critiquing our understandings. This act is a grounding for our actions. The medium of this collaborative act is language.

The conceptual framework for this research is presented in the first section. In the second section, the research process is described. This includes a discussion of the entrée to the research site, the research site, research participants, language issues which needed to be addressed because the participants were non-native English speakers, and the research timeline. The research categories and questions are outlined in the third section. The fourth section describes the methods of data collection including the research conversations, a personal journal, and documents. Next, the analysis of data is described which includes the analysis of texts which are created from the recorded conversations and journal entries. Finally, a summary of the pilot study is included followed by a brief description of the researcher's background.

Conceptual Framework

The contributions of Paul Ricoeur, Richard Kearney, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Martin Heidegger, and Jürgen Habermas provide the theoretical orientation for this research project. Ricoeur's philosophy of narrative identity and Habermas' theory of communicative action were most influential.

Critical hermeneutics is essentially about interpreting a text, being critical of that interpretation, coming to a greater understanding of oneself, others and the world, and finally taking action that is born from that new understanding. Inherent in critical hermeneutic understanding is the ethical responsibility of the reader.

To increase understanding of a group of people such as the Nepali university students past and present who studied in Minnesota and who were the participants for this research, an anthropological approach was chosen because of its interpretive orientation. In the introduction to his seminal book *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Geertz (1973: 5) writes, "I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning." This departure from the positivistic paradigm was revolutionary to the social sciences in the late 20th century. Geertz explains that engaging in ethnography is more than a method of gathering information, but that it is the writing of a thick description of events and their significances in a given context. He writes (1973: 10):

> Doing ethnography is like trying to read (in the sense of "construct a reading of") a manuscript- foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventionalized graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped behavior.

Geertz opened up the world of research to include interpretive research as a meaningful way to engage both the researcher and the research participants. It is through language that interpretation is possible. As Heidegger (1971: 63) so poignantly notes, "The being of anything that is resides in the word. Therefore this statement holds true: Language is the house of Being."

It is through language that we come to understand the lifeworld which Habermas distinguishes by three actor-world relations: the world (objective), my world (subjective), and our world which is the interpersonal, shared world in which we communicate through language (Habermas 1989: 166). Speech is a communicative act between interlocutors who are oriented toward reaching mutual understanding as they appeal to certain validity claims. These validity claims are comprehensibility, shared knowledge, trust, and shared values (Habermas 1979: 97). In order for speaker and hearer to endeavor toward reaching an agreement in the communicative act and to recognize the force of the better argument, they must be able to understand the language the other is speaking, they must have knowledge in common about the topic at hand, they must have shared values, they must trust the other person with whom they are communicating. Most importantly, the individuals engaged in the act of communicating must be oriented toward forming a relationship with the other in community. Habermas' understanding of communicative action allows members of a community to explore possibilities for action through mutual dialogue when addressing conflict, rather than resorting to violence and power-over others.

What is significant about the ethnographer's act is "the inscribing of social discourse" (Geertz 1973: 19) in a written text, thus transforming those events that form a fleeting moment in time experienced between a finite group of people to an event emplotted in a text that can be interpreted by an infinite number of people in time and space. Because a text is removed from the situation of speaker and hearer, it requires the reader to interpret the meaning of the text. Ricoeur argues that this

distanciation is the necessary condition of understanding (1981: 137-138). The reading of a text and making it one's own is referred to as appropriation by Ricoeur. He (1998: 158) writes, "The interpretation of a text culminates in the self-interpretation of a subject who thenceforth understands himself better, understands himself differently, or simply begins to understand himself." From this perspective, we cannot impose our understandings on a text. Instead, Ricoeur (1998: 143) explains that "to understand is *to understand oneself in front of a text*," because we appropriate a proposed world that is discovered and revealed in front of the text, not hidden behind it.

Inherent in discourse, or narrative, is Ricoeur's understanding of time as human time, as opposed to the day-by-day passing of chronological time. Ricoeur (1981: 3) writes, "Time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a narrative; narrative in turn is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal existence." We make sense of the events in our lives by emplotting them in a story. When you meet someone and you want to get to know that person, you get to know them by sharing your life stories. You choose the events you wish to include, moving between past acts and potential acts in the future while narrating in the present moment. Human action is emplotted in narrative. Moreover, Ricoeur (1984: 52-76) approaches time as having three parts; mimesis_1 (prefiguration), mimesis_2 (configuration), and mimesis_3 (refiguration). Mimesis_1 is the understanding of the world that you bring to the text. Ricoeur (1984: 71) states that "mimesis_3 "marks the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the hearer or reader." How you understand the world after reading a text occurs in

mimesis$_3$. However, it is mimesis$_2$ that is the most important because it is in this creative act that emplotment takes place and the "kingdom of as *if*" (Ricoeur 1984: 64) is opened. New worlds of possibilities are configured in narrative as speakers and writers explore imagined futures through narrative.

Individuals bring to a text their own histories and prejudices that shape how they interpret the meaning of text and arrive at understanding. This is a person's effective history. To arrive at new understandings, critical reflection is necessary. Gadamer (2004a: 32) writes, "The process of interpretation takes place whenever we 'understand', especially when we see through prejudices or tear away the pretenses that hide reality. There, indeed, understanding comes into its own." Text, therefore, is not an objective artifact to be analyzed for meaning the author intended to communicate. Once an author has written a text and it is available to others, the text takes on a life of its own independent from the intentions of its author. The text is then in the hands of the reader, and the interpretation of a text requires that individuals consider their taken-for-granted beliefs and traditions as they interpret a text. Gadamer (2004b: 278) writes, "In fact history does not belong to us; we belong to it. Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society, and state in which we live." Once readers have critically reflected on their effective history, then their reading of the text leads to a consideration of the ethical implications and potential action as they approach a text because no text is neutral, and no reading of a text is without judgment. By reading a text with a critical hermeneutic approach,

readers come to a different understanding of themselves, others, or the world. This enlarged horizon is what Gadamer (2004b: 304-306) refers to as a fusion of horizons.

Kearney (2002: 156) continues to herald the power of narrative when he writes, "Narrative is an open-ended invitation to ethical and poetic responsiveness. Storytelling invites us to become not just agents of our own lives, but narrators and readers as well. It shows us that the untold life is not worth living." This understanding of identity is referred to as narrative identity as was discussed in the literature review in the previous chapter. Ricoeur (1988: 246) writes, "To answer the question 'Who?' as Hannah Arendt has so forcefully put it, is to tell the story of a life. The story told tells about the action of the 'who.' And the identity of this 'who' therefore itself must be a narrative identity." However, Kearney (1996: 185) cautions readers about the limits of narrative imagination in relation to the lived world. He writes:

> People *can* do what they like in their fantasies; but they cannot act with impunity in the real world. The imagination knows no censure, but my responsibility to others does. Poetic license applies only to poetics, not to the ethical world of action beyond the text.

Ethical responsibility is a central tenet interwoven in the works which contribute to the conceptual framework for this research and emerged in the conversations with research participants.

Through this research, Nepalese students at Southwest Minnesota State University had the opportunity to tell their stories, to read these stories in their transcripts, and to come to new understanding about themselves, others, and the world. These nascent understandings have the capacity to inform their actions and

their approaches to creating change in their own lives, in their relationships with others, and in the shared world in which they dwell together.

Research Process

Entrée to Research Site

I am a native of Marshall, Minnesota and have maintained close ties to the community and Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU). As mentioned in the introduction, my mother is the Assistant Director of the International Student Services Office. Over the years I have become acquainted with international students at holiday celebrations at my parents' home, at informal gatherings sponsored by the International Student Services Office, and at international education events on campus and in the community. In the summer of 2005 I came to know more authentically members of the Nepalese student community at SMSU through a conversation-based research project that explored why Nepalese students decided to attend SMSU and how they understood their experiences at SMSU. During that summer I met and had conversations with five Nepalese students as well as the Provost of SMSU. These conversations informed the research being presented. Since the summer of 2005, I have continued to develop my relationship with this community of Nepalese students. Now when I visit the campus many of the Nepalese students know who I am, they are familiar with the research interests I have, and they are eager to engage in conversation about these issues.

Research Sites and Encounters Along the Way: From Kathmandu, Nepal to Marshall, Minnesota

To better understand the situation at hand, the need to travel to Nepal became more and more apparent as I progressed in my research. In May 2007 the decision to travel to Nepal was made, and I turned once again to the Nepalese community of students at SMSU for help. With their assistance I was able to contact and arrange to meet three former students who had returned to Nepal after the completion of their studies in Minnesota and were working in private enterprise and for the government. Moreover, because of one students' family connections I left for Nepal knowing that I would be able to meet with officials at the Ministry of Education and Sports and that I would have the opportunity to meet with several prominent Nepalese who either worked in government, higher education or in non-governmental agencies.

It should be noted that it was not easy to find Nepalese who had studied in Minnesota and had returned to Nepal to work. Some of the Nepalese I reached through e-mail informed me that yes, they had returned to Nepal after completing their studies, but that they had left Nepal after working for a short while because they were not happy there. Many other attempts to contact via e-mail Nepalese who were reported to have returned to Nepal after their studies in Minnesota proved to be inutile.

On June 18th I boarded a plane to begin the journey unlike any other I had made before. International travel was not new to me, but for the first time I was struck by the significance of my journey. I was not traveling to a foreign country for pleasure or for work, but to engage in research that could have implications for

others; for others I cared about a great deal. There were also profound implications for myself. Kearney (2003: 81) writes:

> For critical hermeneutics, the self-other relation . . . reveals a practice of ethical 'conscience' which is the other inscribed within me as an uncontainable call from *beyond*. At it is precisely this summons of conscience which breaks the closed circle of the ego-cogito and reminds us of our debts to others.

By being in relationship with the students from Nepal, by listening to their stories and engaging in authentic conversation, I was called to act.

Upon my arrival in Kathmandu I was picked up at the airport by the driver of Mahadeo Yadav, the former Attorney General of Nepal and current Supreme Court advocate. Mr. Yadav's nephew is a graduate student at SMSU and had put me in contact with his uncle prior to my arrival. My first impressions of Kathmandu were dominated by the cacophony of sounds and the diversity of people I saw on the streets. However, the most impressionable memories I have of my experiences in Kathmandu are of the people I met on my journey.

During my visit in Kathmandu I stayed at the Shanker Hotel, a palace during the Rana dynasty. Staff members at the hotel exemplified hospitality in each encounter and were extremely helpful. Moreover, staff members were inquisitive about the research I was doing and did not hesitate to engage in conversation about the political and social situation in Nepal. One of the managers, Phanindra Prasad, shared with me his dream of going to the United States to get a Masters in Business Administration. He asked questions most Nepalese who wish to go abroad for studies have. How much does it really cost to attend a university or college in the United States? Is it difficult to get a visa? Could I help him? I was happy to have met

Phanindra. In our conversations he talked with passion and conviction about his desire to continue his education in the United States and his beliefs that life would be better if he could leave Nepal. Because of our conversations I think I better understood the Nepalese students who had made it to the United States for higher education. Before leaving Nepal I helped Phanindra contact the Director of International Student Services at SMSU, and he is currently in the process of applying to become a student there.

Heerendra Tamrakar, the father of a student attending SMSU, extended his family's hospitality while I was in Kathmandu by inviting me into their home for dinner and taking me to visit Patan, Bhaktapur and Kathmandu. Heerendra had traveled extensively throughout the world and was very critical of the interim government of Nepal as well as the monarchy. He blamed their incompetencies for the social and economic ills the people of Nepal were experiencing. After a trip to Bhaktapur with Heerendra and his family, I wrote the following anecdote in my journal.

> As we were driving, Heerendra pointed to the nonfunctioning cable car system between Kathmandu and Bhaktapur as an example of the country's failure. He said the system had worked well prior to 1990, but since then the government had stolen wires and cables rendering the operation of the trolley system impossible. When I asked him why members of the government would do such a thing, he replied that local bus operators were suffering and not getting enough business.

Heerandra openly expressed his frustration about the social, political, and economic struggles in Nepal and was adamant about having his son and daughter attend a college or university abroad. Furthermore, he did not want them to return to Nepal

because he felt their lives would be better if they lived and worked in a country other than Nepal.

I did not leave the Kathmandu Valley during my stay. Frequent *bandhs* [strikes] were paralyzing transportation, and I could not risk being stranded outside of Kathmandu because of the meetings I had set up throughout my stay for my research conversations. During my visit it was also the rainy season. I had been told that travel outside of the Valley became much more difficult with roads sometimes being washed out or flooded.

I left Nepal with a strong desire to stay longer and an understanding in my heart of hearts that I would return sometime in the future. I boarded my flight to Bangkok with a myriad of ideas, feelings, and reflections racing around in my head. I immediately began writing in my journal as I sat next to an older American couple. But, before long, the three of us were engaged in conversation. I learned that they had lived in Nepal since in the early 1960s and that they had raised their children there. They originally went to Nepal as academic researchers and now worked as consultants for non-governmental agencies. They had experienced first-hand four decades of socio-cultural, political, and economic transformations in Nepal. They asked me about the research I was doing and expressed a need for such research because they wondered what would happen if the exodus of educated youth continued. The three-hour flight passed too quickly and just before landing we exchanged business cards. The gentleman told me that they rented out space to visiting scholars and that they would be happy to have me rent their accommodations if I came back to Nepal for further research. When I looked at the name on the

business card I was left speechless. It was then I learned that I had had the great fortune to be seated next to Dr. Donald Messerschmidt, a well-known anthropologist whose work on Nepal I had recently discovered. After returning to the United States Dr. Messerschmidt and I have continued our conversation through e-mails and he has shared some of his research that he felt would be relevant to my research interests.

After two long days of traveling from Kathmandu, I arrived in Marshall, Minnesota where Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU). As you drive along the two-lane roads that take you on the three-hour journey from the international airport in Minneapolis-St. Paul to Marshall, you pass by seemingly limitless acres of farmland and go through small towns that have anywhere from less than a hundred to a few thousand residents. The plains spread out before you to the point where the horizon meets the sky, and the view is only briefly obstructed by the occasional grain elevator or barn. I've had international students describe this first journey from the airport in Minneapolis-St. Paul to their new home in Marshall as a bewildering journey; they never imagined the world being so flat or so empty. Most international students who come to Marshall to study at Southwest Minnesota State University come from urban areas and have little or no experience living in a rural environment.

Southwest Minnesota State University is a public liberal arts college that first opened its doors to students in 1967. The university has grown steadily since it was founded and student enrollments were reported to be approximately 3,300 full-time and part-time students in the fall of the 2007-2008 academic year. The SMSU 2003-2004 Annual Report (8) also shows that the majority of students are from the region;

most students who attend SMSU are from Minnesota, followed by students from South Dakota and Iowa. Class sizes are relatively small and students have many opportunities to interact with classmates and professors both inside and outside the classroom.

In recent years the number of international students at SMSU has grown without the efforts of overseas recruiting or advertising targeted toward international students. It was only beginning in the 2005-2006 academic year that the members of the university began to actively recruit international students from Nepal. According to Sandy Nelson, Assistant Director of the International Student Program at SMSU, there were 300 international students attending the university in the spring semester of 2008, and 176 of those students were from Nepal (conversation with author, January 22, 2008). SMSU has attracted attention because of its international student population and their experiences at the university. The Institute for International Education has ranked SMSU in the top 40 Leading Baccalaureate Institutions in the United States for international students since the 2003-2004 school year (Open Doors Report 2004, 2006, 2007). Recently SMSU has begun to experience a trend amongst the Nepalese students which is causing concern. For the spring semester 2007, there were 33 students from Nepal who decided to transfer to another university or college, and for the fall semester 2007 another 25 transferred out of SMSU. Most of the Nepalese who transferred out of SMSU had only been there for one semester.

The population of Marshall is estimated to be about 12,600 which makes it a center of business and cultural activity for the region. Marshall was settled primarily by Scandinavian and German immigrants in the late nineteenth century. Agriculture

and some industry helped the community grow over the years. Typical of a small town in a rural area, the overall population is shrinking as young people move to metropolitan areas for economic opportunity and for reasons of convenience. However, the presence of international students over the years is contributing to a changing horizon for this small town. Some former students are choosing to stay in the area and over time are becoming members of the community.

I grew up in the town of Marshall and attended Southwest Minnesota State University for some of my undergraduate courses. I have maintained a strong interest in the university and its international students because I believe that the presence of international students on campus and in the community provides opportunities for interaction, conversation and new understandings to emerge for international students, for American students at SMSU, and for Marshall residents who may have few other opportunities to engage in conversation with someone from a different part of the world.

Research Participants

The research participants for this study came from educated and privileged backgrounds in Nepal. Their status opens up the potential for them to be leaders in creating change in their country. Seven Nepalese students who were enrolled at SMSU at the time of the research were contacted and invited to be participants. A letter of introduction was sent to these participants six weeks prior to the meeting. A sample letter of introduction can be found in Appendix A. Once the participants agreed to take part in the conversation, a letter of confirmation was sent. An example of this letter can be found in Appendix B. Figure 4 on the following page lists the

research participants who were students at SMSU in July 2007 when the research conversations took place.

Name	Academic Year SMSU	Gender	Age Range
Bishal BC	Senior	Male	18-25
Shradda Dhungel	Sophomore	Female	18-25
Sanjeev Khadaka	Senior	Male	18-25
Navin Pokhrel	Freshman	Male	18-25
Priyanka Sharma	Senior	Female	18-25
Teres Shrestha	Graduate Student	Female	25-35
AJ Yadav	Graduate Student	Male	25-35

Figure 4. Research Participants at SMSU

In addition to the participants identified in Figure 4, I arranged to meet with two graduates of Southwest Minnesota State University and one graduate of Mankato State University in Minnesota who returned to Nepal when I visited Kathmandu. In addition, while I was in Nepal I had several conversations which were arranged after my arrival in Kathmandu. All of the participants I met with in Kathmandu are identified in Figure 5.

Name	Profession	Gender	Studied in Minnesota	Age Range
Bhuwan Dhungana	Professor, Writer	Female	No	55-65
Daman Dhungana	Lawyer	Male	No	55-65
Nishesh Dhungana	USAID consultant	Male	Yes	25-35
Surya Dhungel	UNDP Advisor	Male	No	55-65
Ajit Shah	CEO, Entrepreneur	Male	Yes	25-35
Bimal Shah	Information Technology	Male	Yes	25-35
Chitra Lekha Yadav	Politician	Female	No	45-55

Figure 5. Research Participants in Kathmandu

I met with Bhuwan Dhungana, a feminist writer and university professor, whose son had studied at SMSU. I also had a conversation with her husband, Daman Dhungana, who was a founder of the Nepal Students Democratic Union in 1969 and is currently a Supreme Court lawyer and human rights activist. In addition, I spoke with Chitra

Lekha Yadav from the Terai Region, who is Deputy Speaker of the Nepalese Parliament. On my last night in Kathmandu I met with Surya Dhungel who is a constitutional advisor for the United Nations Development Program.
The difference in generations permitted a more comprehensive understanding of the research context.

I also had informal conversations which were not transcribed. One was in Kathmandu with Heerendra Tamrakar, a parent of two current SMSU students. The other informal conversation was on my flight from Kathmandu to Bangkok with Dr. Donald Messerschmidt, a cultural anthropologist from the United States who has lived in Nepal since the 1960s.

Language

All of the research conversations in the United States and Nepal were conducted in English. While the Nepalese international students did not speak English as their first language, they had demonstrated a certain level of proficiency in English that allowed them to attend an American university. The other participants I spoke with who had not studied in the United States had acquired proficiency in English through their studies in Nepal and work experiences. The conversations with participants were transcribed as close to the original utterance as possible and any errors in grammar or word usage were retained in the transcription as long as they did not interfere with meaning. As an instructor of English to non-native speakers of English, I am sensitive to the problems these students may have in expressing their ideas in English and am accustomed to variations in pronunciation.

Research Categories and Questions

Three categories were identified to guide the research; identity, solicitude, and imagination. These categories were discussed in more detail in the review of literature. Within each of these categories, guiding questions were developed that were intended to engage both participants in an authentic conversation. The questions were open-ended and invited participants to talk about their own life experiences.

Category I: Identity

The concept of identity was integral to the conversations with participants. Ricoeur (1988: 246) reminds us that "to answer the question 'Who?' . . . is to tell the story of a life. The story told tells of the action of the 'who.' And the identity of this 'who' therefore itself must be a narrative identity." How the Nepalese students studying in the United States interpret, understand, and create narratives about their identities has implications for how they relate to the past and ultimately approach their futures.

1) How do you, here in America, see yourself in relation to your homeland?
2) What does development/bikas mean to you?

Category II: Solicitude

Solicitude is more than a sense of duty for the other. According to Ricoeur (1992: 193-194) solicitude is "esteem of *the other as oneself* and the esteem of *oneself as an other*." Considering this interpretation of solicitude could open up new understandings about development which contributes to current narratives about Nepal and the people of Nepal.

1) How could development guided by solicitude (respect and esteem between self and others) transform Nepal?
2) Have you seen any examples of this?

Category III: Imagination

Kearney (1988: 236) addresses the formidable nature of imagination when he writes, "It is the possibility of the unreal which provides us with the freedom to found the real." Being able to imagine differently is necessary in creating change. The following questions were developed to encourage conversation where the power of the imagination was unveiled.

1) Can you imagine yourself living forever in the United States? Can you imagine yourself living forever in Nepal? Can you imagine yourself living in both?
2) How can your cultural understanding of work in addition to your experiences and education in the United States contribute to a new world of possibilities for Nepal's future?

These questions were intended to be guiding questions; other questions emerged in the course of the conversation and were included in the discourse. Some questions of interest came from the research participants as well.

Data Collection and Text Creation

Data for this research was collected in the form of conversations with research participants, a personal journal kept by the researcher, and documents about the issue at hand. This body of data was used to create the texts which were then analyzed. This research abided by the Human Subjects regulations of the University of San

Francisco. A copy of the letter of approval to use human subjects from the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at the University of San Francisco can be found in Appendix C.

Conversations

Language is the medium for hermeneutic inquiry, and it is in conversation that the researcher and research participants can engage in the interpretation and critique of the issues at hand. I emphasize the word *conversation* because a true conversation where participants are oriented toward new understandings is quite different from an interview where the researcher asks a question and the subject responds. It was important for the research participants to understand that the research protocol this researcher adopted was different from an interview. Permission to record the conversations was granted by participants, and participants were informed that they could request to terminate the conversations at any time. The participants were also informed that the conversations would not be confidential and that their permission was requested so that excerpts from the conversation could be used in dissertation and any future publications. Most conversations lasted about an hour.

Once the conversations were recorded, they were transcribed by me. The transcription was then sent to the research participant for review and editing along with a letter to thank them for their participation. A sample thank you letter can be found in Appendix D. After the transcript was reviewed by the research participant, the text became a part of the data for the research. After a month of having sent out the transcripts, I had received only several responses from participants stating in all cases that they did not wish to make any changes to the transcripts. I was concerned

that I had not heard from the other participants, so I arranged to meet with Dr. Shabnam Koirala-Azad, one of my professors and committee members. Because she was from Nepal I wanted to ask her about the lack of response from participants, and she confirmed that unfortunately this was not surprising.

Personal Journal

An integral part of the research process was a personal journal I kept during the research process. The journal was a space where I could record reflections about the research process and issues at hand, reflections which at times led to the uncovering of new understandings about myself and about the research.

Documents

Literature about the issue at hand was an important source of data which reflected previously conducted research. The body of literature which informed the research continued to grow as I enriched my understanding of the issues at hand and theory through continued reading. In addition to books and journals, other print documents and on-line documents such as reports and news briefs were consulted given the timeliness of the issues at hand in Nepal and in international higher education. Reports issued by the United Nations, World Bank, Asian Development Bank and various non-governmental organizations were indispensable in informing my understanding.

Research Timeline

The field-based research occurred in Kathmandu in June and in Minnesota in July 2007. The conversations were transcribed into October. Analysis of the data took place in October and November. Writing and editing was completed in

December and January. A final draft of the dissertation was given to members of the committee in March 2008.

Data Analysis

Analysis of data in critical hermeneutic inquiry requires that the researcher engage imaginatively and creatively with the texts. This is a to and fro process in which the researcher brings together understanding of the past and anticipation of the future in the present moment of interpretation. The reader is able to understand oneself and the world differently, consequently approaching issues in alternative manners because of an interpretation of a text. Ricoeur (1976: 92) writes:

> What has to be appropriated is the meaning of the text itself, conceived in a dynamic way as the direction of thought opened up by the text. In other words, what has to be appropriated is nothing other than the power of disclosing a world that constitutes the reference of the text.

The boundaries of this research were created by the people who agreed to participate within the selected categories for data collection and analysis. How the data were understood and interpreted by each reader depended on what each reader brought to the text. The following sequence was followed for data analysis in a critical hermeneutic framework as presented in Herda (1999: 98-99).

- The discourse was captured by transcribing the recorded conversations. It was important for the researcher to do the transcription rather than having another person do it or using transcription software. In hearing the conversation again, it was experienced from a different perspective. The researcher had the opportunity to reflect on what was said in the conversation, discover new meanings, and further ideas for the analysis when listening to the recording of the research conversation and engaging in the transcription. When the transcriptions were completed, a reading of them allowed the researcher to develop an overview of the issue at hand and begin appropriating a new world from the text.

- Transcripts were sent to each conversation partner so that each participant had the opportunity to read the transcript delete, add, or change the transcript of what as said in the conversation.

- Significant statements were pulled out, themes were developed, and they were placed within categories.

- The categories or themes were then substantiated with quotations from the conversation transcripts, from observations, and from the researcher's personal journal. Efforts were made to stay as close as possible to the original language when using quotations from the conversation transcripts. Participants in the research are not native speakers of English: therefore, some minor changes were necessary when grammar or word choice made the meaning unclear.

- The themes were examined to determine what significance they had when approached within a critical hermeneutic framework. Imagination, play, and creativity were important in the interweaving of theory, themes, and quotations taken from the participants' conversation transcripts. Additional data taken from observations, documents, and personal journal were included.

- A context for the written discussion was set.

- The grouping of themes and sub-themes within the categories were discussed according to the theoretical framework and the issue at hand. It was possible that themes could fit into more than one category. This was indicated in the discussion as different dimensions of the themes or sub-themes were explored.

- The issue at hand was discussed from a theoretical perspective. A practical implementation of critical hermeneutics was demonstrated.

- Implications taken from the written discussion which offered new insights into and alternative directions for the issue at hand were identified and discussed.

- Areas in which further study of the issue at hand would be beneficial were brought out.

- Examples of learning experiences and fusions of horizons on the part of participants were given. The study was then related to the life of the researcher in terms of what was learned and the role the research played in the life of the researcher.

The process of data analysis in a critical hermeneutic framework is reflective and transformative as traditions, practices and beliefs are brought into question and

critiqued. However, the experience is not limited to the intellectual or theoretical. Critical hermeneutics in the Ricoeurean tradition necessitates that new understandings be followed by ethical action that begin with the individual in his or her relationships with the other.

Field Study

Introduction

A field study was conducted during the fall of 2006 as an exploration into the issues which later guided this research. A conversation with the research participant provided the data for the creation of a text and analysis of that text. The conversation transcript can be found in Appendix E. From this analysis several themes emerged which aided in the development of the proposed research questions and categories. The field study also gave the researcher opportunity to engage in the research process described in the previous sections, albeit in an abbreviated format. The following description of the field study includes a brief description of the conversation partner, a description of the analysis of the text, implications arising from the field study, and a summary.

Conversation Partner

Sanjeev Khadaka is from Patan, Nepal near Kathmandu. When his parents forbade him to join the military, they suggested studying abroad as an alternative for his immediate future. He learned about SMSU from a friend who had already begun his studies at this university. Sanjeev arrived at SMSU in the spring semester of the 2004-2005 school year to enter the university as a first year student and is pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration.

I first met Sanjeev in February 2005 when we were both part of a group invited to share our experiences in international education at a charter elementary school in southwestern Minnesota. Sanjeev and I started to talk in the van on our way to the charter school, and I found him to be very eager to talk about what he was experiencing as a foreigner in a new land and about the current situation in Nepal. He was also interested in my doctoral studies and wanted to talk about the research I was doing. The conversation I had with Sanjeev was very helpful in helping me develop the questions and categories for the proposed research.

Theory

The theory used in the field study is the same as discussed in the Conceptual Framework section of this part of the chapter. The belief that an individual can come to new understandings of self through the reading of text, and then is ethically responsible to act because of those new understandings underlines the theoretical orientation for the field study.

Analysis of Text

In my conversation with Sanjeev, he spoke extensively of the past and of the future in relation to his personal life and to Nepal when sharing his story. He couldn't forget the struggles that people are facing everyday in his native country. He said, "The whole country is going down, down, down. And there is no economy and there is nothing . . . . What are we doing?" The most powerful statement Sanjeev made was later on in our conversation. He expressed utter despair and a lack of hope regarding the corruption, poverty, and civil unrest in Nepal when he said, "You know, one guy can't do anything. You need people with ideas, with experience."

Individuals bring with them the prejudices and pre-judgments which are a part of their effective history, and a critical reflection regarding these pre-judgments are necessary for an individual to arrive at a new understanding (Gadamer 1976: xviii). This reorientation of meaning and understanding is referred to as a fusion of horizons, something which I believe Sanjeev was speaking of in our conversation as he shared and his life story. In stepping outside of Nepal and engaging in conversation with other international and American students, professors, and friends about the issues at hand, Sanjeev and others like him have a better chance of bringing new interpretations to a troubled narrative that could lead to social change. Before this can occur, students like must be able to imagine new possibilities. Herda (1999: 81) writes:

> If we take seriously the act of reinterpreting our world and our past activities, we will realize that we are not simply reviewing and analyzing past theories, policies, or assuming the role of an advocate. Rather, we are using our knowledge and understandings to aid in shaping the future and interpreting the past with a preorientation that we will use this knowledge to create new possibilities for the future.

It will also be important for Nepalese students to imagine a different Nepal and to share that narrative in public discourse, believing that the power to imagine creates opportunities for change for self and society. Kearney (2004: 87) writes, "The social imagery is liberating to the degree that its utopian forward look critically reappropriates its archeological backward look, in such a way that history itself may be creatively transformed." Transformations are in order, and the power to act resides in each individual.

Implications

International students such as Sanjeev are in a perpetual state of reflection and critique after they arrive in a new country for their studies as they reinterpret their identities, their life stories, their beliefs and their futures. It would be hard for international students to escape this kind of reflection as their lives in a new land juxtapose the taken-for-granted with the never-before-experienced. One of the shortcomings in the current reality of international education is that international students such as Sanjeev too often see themselves as outsiders, or aliens, looking in from the outside and this often prohibits authentic communication and understanding between international students and American students, administrators and professors. Kearney (2003: 80) writes "one of the best ways to de-alienate the other is to recognize a) oneself as another and (b) the other as (in part) another self." I found that Sanjeev was very eager to talk about his experiences and ideas, and quite surprised to find an American who was willing to listen and who had some knowledge of the situation in Nepal.

In the conversation, Sanjeev talked about the dependence on aid from external sources, the presence of numerous non-governmental agencies throughout Nepal, and expressed esteem for developed countries. As a result of these taken-for-granted beliefs, Sanjeev failed to see himself as an individual who has the power to act ethically and to affect change one person, one relationship at a time. A collective belief that for change to occur, it must be proclaimed and enacted at the level of the government, the nation or the international aid agencies denies the individual the capacity to act. Nepalese students abroad can bring new knowledge and

understandings to the way they approach the difficult social, economic and political issues facing Nepal and its citizens today. On one hand, Nepalese who go abroad can impose what they have learned outside of Nepal when they return. However, bringing this critical hermeneutic perspective into the research conversations has the potential to change how these students understand themselves, their relationships with others, and their power to act ethically in relationship with others.

Summary

The field study discussed in this section was conducted at Southwest Minnesota State University in Marshall, Minnesota. The data collected in the conversation with Sanjeev Khadaka was analyzed through the lens of critical hermeneutic theory and contributed to the development of the proposed research categories and questions. A critique of current narratives which have contributed to a sense of failure and hopelessness surrounding the situation in Nepal is in order as revealed in the analysis of the research data.

Background of Researcher

My interests in international education began in 1989 at the age of sixteen when I went to France for a year on an educational exchange. Coming from a small town in rural America, I had no understanding of the world other than that which was informed by my experiences with my family and in my local community. My study abroad experience was the founding event for the rest of my life. I decided at that time that I wanted to pursue my passion for language and intercultural experiences as an instructor of English to international students.

After receiving a Master of Arts in French Literature and a Master of Arts in English, I moved to Japan to teach English to university students. At the International University of Japan I had the opportunity to spend three summers working with graduate students from Japan and throughout Asia who were pursuing a Masters in Business Administration or a Masters in International Development. Many students worked for the Ministry of Finance in their native countries such as Vietnam, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Thailand, or China and received financial support for their graduate studies from the International Monetary Fund or the Japan International Cooperation Agency.

Because of my experiences teaching these students I reinterpreted and re-imagined my role as an English teacher so that I was able to address global business and development issues in the courses I taught. I found that these students were very eager to learn Western business models and economic theories, but that they were quite reticent to include their interpretations informed by local beliefs, traditions, and practices in discussions about issues such as poverty reduction and sustainability in their native countries. I found that most of these international students from developing countries were at the International University of Japan to learn from what they believed to be Western experts, and that these international students felt their understandings of the issues at hand in their own countries or regions were not worthy of being included in the discussion. I was deeply troubled by this because these same students would be some of the future leaders and policy-makers in these countries undergoing significant economic, political, and social transformations.

My experiences with these international students also persuaded me that it was time for me to return to the United States to pursue a doctorate in Organizational Leadership at the University of San Francisco. It has been a joy for me to continue to learn and grow through this experience. The intellectual challenges have taken me in directions I wouldn't have thought possible at the onset, but it has been the new understandings of what it means to be in relationship with others that have brought me the most joy.

I have traveled in various countries throughout Asia and Europe, but had not spent any time in Nepal prior to this research. Traveling to Nepal and experiencing the context I was researching helped me understand the issues I was writing about differently and more meaningfully. Moreover, my experiences in Nepal enriched the research conversations and analysis of the data.

Summary

In this chapter, the protocol used in this research was presented along with the conceptual framework, an overview of the field study, and a statement about the background of the researcher. In Chapter Five, the data are presented as a text emplotted.

CHAPTER V: PRESENTATION OF DATA

Introduction

In Chapter Five I present the data in the form of narratives that were shared with me by members of the Nepalese community who were participants in this research. These included conversations with Nepalese students in the United States at Southwest Minnesota State University, conversations with three Nepalese who received their bachelor's degrees in Minnesota and have since returned to Nepal for work in the past five years, and conversations with four Nepalese involved in academia, politics, and development in Nepal. The first text that was created included all of the transcripts from the conversations with participants. From that entirety, I have emplotted a second text presented in this chapter that is comprised of characters, testimonies, and brief descriptions of settings where the events of conversation took place.

The voices of the research participants do not represent a cross section of Nepalese society. The orientation of the research participants toward international experiences is an indication of their elite status within Nepalese society. It cannot be denied that there is a growing middle-class in Nepal. As I walked down the store-front lined streets of Kathmandu crowded with people, the array of imported products available, Hollywood movies being advertised on billboards, and teen fashion magazines lining the shelves of newsstands attested to their undeniable presence and appetite for consumer goods. However, the ability to fund studies for higher education in a foreign country is still financially out of reach for the vast majority of Nepalese citizens. The content of the following narrative would most likely have

been very different had the research conversations been with Nepalese of various ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. Having lived or traveled extensively outside of Nepal, all of the research participants used their experiences abroad as a point of reference for their interpretation and critique of the social, political, and economic systems in Nepal. Through narrative, participants showed that these experiences outside of Nepal have contributed to their understanding of themselves, of the situation at hand in Nepal, and their capacity to imagine different ways of being and acting in the shared world.

Dominant themes which emerged in the conversations with participants were reflections on the Nepalese state, including political instability and corruption, reflections on Nepalese society, the promise of education, interpreting development, reflections on identity, and narratives about the future. Inherent in each of the themes to follow are the notions of identity, solicitude and imagination which will be analyzed in Chapter Six.

On The Nepalese State

Diversity in many ways defines Nepal and its people. It is a heterogeneous state in which people are struggling to come to terms with a national identity. They are also struggling to find ways to develop a political system that is capable of building trust and participation in government among its citizens that is free from coercion, apathy, and distrust. The political instability and corruption that have terrorized the people of Nepal are dominant themes that emerged in the narratives that follow.

Political Instability

The manager at the Shanker Hotel where I am staying tells me to be careful and to pay attention as I am traveling throughout Kathmandu today. The threat of strikes, or *bandhs*, has kept many people off of the streets this late morning. My taxi ride across town to the Dwarika Hotel to meet Nishesh Dhungana is quick because there is noticeably less traffic on the normally congested and polluted roads. Nishesh has suggested meeting at the hotel because his house has no street address and we can walk to his home easily from the hotel. As we walk up to the front of Nishesh's house, he tells me the freshly painted exterior and decorations are for his wedding which will take place in three days. We enter his family home and escape the jumbled sights and sounds of the streets for the chaos of three generations of a Nepalese family engaged in wedding preparations.

Once I have been introduced to different members of the family, Nishesh and I retreat to the sitting room and he begins to share his story. Nishesh Dhungana received his bachelor's degree in political science from Southwest Minnesota State University in 2002. After he completed his studies, he worked in Boston for John Kerry's presidential campaign. Nishesh's dreams of working in the United States were cut short when he returned to Nepal to live when his father fell ill because "that was my duty as a son." He now lives in Nepal and works for USAID as a consultant, focusing on conflict resolution and the peace process. Nishesh, like many of his contemporaries, is critical of the political situation in Nepal. He is especially critical of various political groups, Maoists and others, for interfering in education. He explains, "Those rival groups take the students as a major source for the revolution, for violence and those things. Mostly college students. They are young and hot-

blooded. So, they can mobilize the students well." Frequent rallies and strikes and an atmosphere of fear interfere with the normal operation of universities and schools and the ability of politicians, educators, and students to focus on improving education at all levels.

For those students who left Nepal for higher education, the political instability affects their decisions concerning what they will do after they graduate. Nishesh speaks with frustration in his voice. "So, if you come back to Nepal, it is hard to get a job here. It is the political instability. So better you stay over there. And other thing is *bandhs* [strikes]. Everything closed down." He sighs and pauses after finishing with this thought. "Those things irritate them and they will want to go back to the United States." He uses "them" as a term of general reference, but the look on his face and the tone of his voice indicate that it's possible he is referring to himself as well.

Nishesh's mother, Bhuwan Dhungana, is a well-known writer and professor in Nepal. She tells me later on in the day that it has been frustrating for Nishesh since he returned to Nepal because he compares the situation in Nepal to that in the United States. She says that it is difficult for him to accept the way things are in Nepal now that he has seen how good the teaching practices, the professors, and the environment are for learning in the United States. Bhuwan also expresses the following sentiments toward those who have left Nepal for their studies. "I think they are watching if the political situation is going to be better. Students who have some love and affection toward their home country and those who are genuine they think they must go and do some work in their country." She stops and continues a few moments later. "If the

political situation gets better, some will come over here and the country will be better." Bhuwan struggles as a professor at Tribhuvan University. She feels that because of the unstable environment students have grown up in, Nepalese youth are more inclined to focus on their own needs than the needs of others, but she hesitates to describe them as selfish.

The United Nations Development Program has a Constitutional Advisory Support team of people working in Nepal to aid in the political stabilization process. Surya Dhungel is a member of that team. He is a constitutional expert and practiced law for many years in Nepal's Supreme Court. He was summoned back to Nepal from his post with the UN Human Rights Office in Cambodia to assist in the Constituent Assembly elections. He greets me at the door and welcomes me into his home for our conversation. He introduces me to this wife, Kamala Dhungel, who is founder of the non-governmental organization Women in Environment. She is busy throughout the evening bringing in dishes of traditional Nepalese food to share and filling our glasses. I try to engage her in conversation, but she is too busy making sure everyone's needs are taken care of to talk. The conversation with Surya throughout the evening takes many directions, but often comes back to the central issue of political instability. Surya speaks with frustration in his voice when he addresses the effects the instability has had on education. He says:

> School kids in provinces were abducted in groups and taken out to the jungle and they were forced, many of them tortured, and they were compelled to join the Maoists. So, then people started selling their land and all concentrated in Kathmandu. They are threatened and quite insecure. Anytime Maoists could extort money. In this situation then, the government is in trouble. Why should the students suffer? So, they tried to sell land and send people abroad.

The violence throughout the rural parts of the country surrounding the political instability has fueled mass migration to the Kathmandu Valley because people are afraid what might happen to their children if they stay in the more volatile rural areas.

I ask Surya what happens for those who cannot afford to go abroad for their studies. He explains that those youth have also been forced to seek a better life beyond the borders of Nepal. "They get small jobs in Middle East, in Korea, in Malaysia. Wherever possible," he laments. He says that the country has left them with no option but to leave. Even their parents don't want them to come back because they tell their children "you don't have your future here." What Surya does not acknowledge is that it is only very few Nepalese who go to countries such as the Middle East, Korea, or Malaysia to find work in a desperate attempt to make a living for themselves and the families they have left behind.

Surya's words and those shared by Bhuwan are conflicting narratives. In many cases parents tell their children who have left not to come back to Nepal because of the political and social issues creating conflict throughout the country. Others, like Bhuwan, state that those who are genuine and really love their country will come back to Nepal to use their knowledge and experiences abroad to work for social change that will make the future of the country better.

Surya's comments about young Nepalese going abroad for manual labor would come back to me the following week on my flight to Bangkok. Half of the airplane is filled with young Nepalese men en route to Malaysia for a three-year contract as manual laborers in that rapidly growing country. Mid-flight one of the flight attendants on Thai Airways puts on rubber gloves to clean the urine that has

begun to leak from the restroom and spill down the aisle. "They don't know how to attach a seatbelt or use the toilets in the lavatory," she says in an apologetic tone to me, Dr. Donald Messerschmidt who is a cultural anthropologist, and his wife who are sitting next to me on the plane. I watch a group of these young Nepalese men huddle around a picture of cosmopolitan Kuala Lumpur one man holds in his hands, and I wonder what their lives will become in a country which is becoming increasingly hostile to foreign workers and is struggling with ethnic tensions. Dr. Messerschmidt speaks Nepali and asks the young men what they know about the work they are going to do. He tells me they think they are going to work in construction, but they are not sure. They are excited about earning money and sending it back to help their families.

In our conversation Surya also addresses how political instability has affected higher education in Nepal. Now that the peace agreement has been signed, Surya believes a major obstacle in the peace process is de-politicizing university campuses in Nepal. He says:

> The challenge is quite big because the university system is so much politicized. The politicians do politics with the students. The campuses are closed. The schools are locked up and closed you know, so we are not really able to bring about changes. The schools are for education. The conflict is over, now no more politics in the schools! Our politicians won't say that because most of their constituencies have come from the schools and that is their training ground, the whole system and culture we have developed. Some of the universities where they wanted to prevent any political activities among teachers or students, the political parties tried to influence the teachers and they create problems. That is because none of the political parties feel that their foundation is strong.

The intermingling of politics and education is a tradition that has been opened up to increasing critique by members of Nepalese society. The testimonies shared by research participants are evidence of this.

The absence of authentic leadership at the national level in Nepal has also contributed to political instability and disheartened people like Surya Dhungel who is actively engaged in the public sphere regarding the peace process. He tells me that ten years ago there were still prospects for change to occur despite the initial conflict situation, but that a lack of leadership coupled with misguided leadership has caused people to lose hope and patience. "Because of the royal takeover and the situation of the political leadership, none of the parties, none of the political leaders, none of the civil leaders can say they have hope that someone is going to provide leadership."

Similar thoughts are echoed by Shradda Dhungel, a student in her junior year pursuing her bachelor's degree in environmental science at SMSU. She was recommended to be a research participant because of her active involvement both on campus and in the wider community. She is president of the Lion's Club and embraces the leadership opportunities she has been able to experience because of her studies in the United States. She talks about the constant fear people in Nepal have felt under the king's rule and because of the ruthlessness of the Maoist rebels. She says this fear makes people not want to speak their mind. When I ask her how fear and pervasive distrust can be overcome she states, "I think if the commitment by leaders is more prominent maybe then people would get someone to trust." However, she expresses little hope that any Nepalese leader will embrace leadership built on trust and commitment in the near future. Furthermore, she doesn't believe that

democracy will benefit the people of Nepal. She proclaims, "Nepal did much better when there was no democracy. I understand people need freedom and independence, but they don't seem to use it in the right way." For Shradda, the corrupted practices of government she has experienced in Nepal have turned her against efforts to include citizens in government. The recent history of political instability in Nepal has dominated national narratives and personal narratives during the lifetime of the students and recent graduates who were participants in the research. The distrust and ensuing rejection of the leadership has been a catalyst for many to explore new ways of leading and acting in the shared world which will be discussed in greater detail in the section of this chapter entitled Looking Ahead: An Uncertain Future.

Corruption

Corruption in Nepal is a major concern for all of the research participants. Bishal BC is a senior in accounting at SMSU. He provides volunteer accounting services for members of the community and campus organizations and is working as an intern for a national bank when we meet. He was recommended as a research participant because of his commitment to service to others and his commitment to doing any tasks he takes on well. In our conversation, he becomes very frustrated when talking about widespread corruption in Nepal. He blames the political system and leaders within that system for corruption that has spread throughout society. He says, "I blame leaders for corruption. I don't blame general people." Bishal says that corrupted people in positions of power have made others in society engage in corrupt activities of their own. "Maybe I will be corrupted when I go back to Nepal because I can't live on a hundred dollars a month. I will be thinking about my family and living

in good condition. So, I will be corrupt." For Bishal, corruption has become an accepted reality. He tells me that all leaders are corrupt, no matter what country they live in. "Do they care about the country? Are they patriotic? They are not. They just want money and power and they will do anything to get that." Despite his negative views toward leadership, Bishal has chosen to become involved in leadership positions and has fulfilled all of his responsibilities with integrity and a passion to serve others.

Bimal Shah graduated with a degree in computer science from Mankato State University in Minnesota. He originally wanted to study automotive engineering because he loved everything about cars, but he changed his major to computer science because his family and peers persuaded him that this was a better choice. They believed he would have more job opportunities in that field; therefore, computer science was the preferable option. When Bimal returned to Nepal after working for a short while in the United States, it was to be with his father who was in ill health. Bimal worked for a Nepalese software company for several months when he first returned to Nepal, and then he briefly worked for a Dutch company that outsourced data processing. Neither job suited him because he wasn't able to use the knowledge and experience he gained in the United States in his positions, so he searched for a job that would allow him to integrate his knowledge and experience abroad with his knowledge of the local culture and local needs.

Bimal now happily works for the government of Nepal for the National Information Technology Center. He tells me he is focusing on the development of electronic government and that he loves the work he is doing because he is able to

help government offices provide much needed information and forms to citizens through government websites. I am intrigued by this and ask him how many people in Nepal have access to the Internet. He laughs and tells me the government exaggerates and claims it is one percent, but in fact the number of people who have access to the Internet is less than half of one percent. As a member of the government, he recognizes the rampant corruption that plagues the political system. He laughs and then explains:

> There are loopholes in government where you can take bribes. So, if there are five people in our organization and two are making extra money taking bribes, then everyone will say the other three are stupid people. You have got to do that. I believe that 80 percent of all government employees come to government with the motive of making extra money through bribes.

Nor are politicians or the democratic process free from corruption. Bimal is very skeptical about the upcoming Constituent Assembly elections. He explains that free and fair elections cannot be expected in developing countries, and Nepal is no exception. "People will just be forced to vote for a certain party." He is especially fearful of the Maoists and their history of using violence and terror to intimidate villagers. I think of Bimal when it is announced on January 26th, 2008 that 200 members of the Youth Communist League (YCL) will be sent to each of the Constituent Assembly election polling places. After the signing of the peace accord, the Maoist rebels restructured their youth wing into the YCL. Members of the YCL have sought to fight what they perceive as corruption, essentially becoming reckless vigilantes who have been blamed for acts of violence and human rights abuses throughout Nepal.

One evening while in Kathmandu I have dinner with my friend Heerendra and his extended family. Heerendra's two children are studying at SMSU because he feels that Nepal is falling apart and he does not want his children's futures to suffer because of the chaos in Nepal. His family owns a trendy restaurant in Kathamndu that caters to foreign visitors, expatriates who live in Nepal, and wealthy Nepalese. During dinner Heerendra talks about how difficult life has become in Nepal since the Maoist insurgency began. After dinner Heerendra pulls out photographs of his uncle who is in the hospital. His uncle is a wealthy shop owner in Kathmandu. Heerendra's uncle was sleeping when men armed with machetes came into his home, robbed him, and viciously attacked him. The graphic pictures show an unconscious man in a hospital bed covered in bandages because of large cuts all over his body. Heerendra says they believe he was targeted by members of the Youth Communist League because he hadn't cooperated with them.

On Nepalese Society

Research participants used their experiences abroad as a point of reference when talking about the issues at hand. In these conversations many reflections on the state of Nepalese society emerged, unveiling taken-for granted beliefs about the social hierarchy in Nepal. The caste system was removed from Nepalese law in 1963, but according to the narratives participants shared cultural and religious beliefs about social status persist. Beliefs about social hierarchy determine how people get jobs and how members of society see and act toward each other. Their narratives also explore new worlds of possibilities regarding one's understanding of self in relation to others and one's responsibility in society.

Daman Nath Dhungana is a well-known lawyer, former Speaker of the House of Representative, and a prominent human rights activist in Nepal. Daman served as a facilitator in the peace negotiations between the Maoists and the Nepalese government. He has spoken out vehemently against social inequity throughout his career. We speak briefly after I have had a conversation with his son, Nishesh. Daman blames social issues for the current conflicts in Nepal. He says:

> We have different classes in society. Some are very poor and starving and some work hard but eat little. So this being the case, I think in the peace process education reforms must be intensified and then the younger generation must be taught about peace, non-violence, the democratic process. The pillars of democracy . . . The route of peace lies in schools and in the social environment. Give them confidence so they believe in the process and they believe in the rule of law.

He argues that all members of society must truly be equal for democracy to work in Nepal. Daman goes on to talk about current efforts to educate teachers in Nepal about the democratic process. Daman imagines a future for Nepal where the social conflicts can be overcome through participation of all citizens in government and in civil society. For now, some who have the financial means to leave the country are doing so. But, as they leave Nepal they no longer have the right to partake in matters of the state. This is an issue that is causing growing discontent among Non-Resident Nepalese (NRNs) as the Constituent Assembly elections approach.

Some Nepalese students in the United States have similar beliefs to Daman's about the social causes of conflict in Nepal. Bishal BC explains the situation in Nepal in terms of people trying to pull on the leg of a man going up so they can pull him back down to their level. Nishesh interprets the situation somewhat differently. He explains that opportunity in Nepalese society, especially employment opportunity, is

based on social relations. Qualifications do not matter as long as you know someone in the company or organization you want to work for. This can be disheartening for young Nepalese who strive to do well, but are denied opportunity despite their efforts. Nishesh admits that he can easily get a job based on his father's name, but that he wants "to make my own identity." Sanjeev Khadaka, a senior at SMSU also speaks about the importance of social relations. He sees the inequity in the education system. He gives this example of how the injustice of social relations works in Nepal:

> For example, you and me right. You score 99 percent, and I score 72 percent, but I am a minister's son, or I am a very rich family guy, or a royal family, or I am very connected to the royal family. And you are from a very middle class family. If I get 72 percent and you got 99 percent, they will give me, and they will not give you. That makes most of the people frustrated nowadays, because you deserve that thing but you don't get it.

The belief that people should be judged for their actions rather than their social status was important for Sanjeev and other research participants. Sanjeev later explains that pervasive discrimination based on class and status has caused people to lash out at the government and against each other, resulting in the terror and violence that he says forced him to leave Nepal.

On a trip to SMSU in the winter of 2007 I met Priyanka Sharma while I was having lunch in the student center. She was sitting nearby and we became engaged in conversation. After this first meeting, I asked her if she would like to be a participant in this research and she said she would love to talk in more detail about the issues I was exploring in my research. Priyanka is a senior at SMSU studying public administration. Before coming to the United States she received her bachelor's degree in Nepal in development studies. After receiving her bachelor's degree from

SMSU she plans on attending graduate school somewhere in the United States. She says she will go back to Nepal when she has finished her studies so she can bring back the experiences and knowledge she has gained in the United States "to contribute to positive social change in my home country." She appreciates and admires the work ethic and honesty she has seen demonstrated by her peers in the United States. She describes her fellow American students as "giving 100 percent to their organizations" and being so honest "sometimes it's scary." In talking about society in Nepal she states matter-of-factly, "There is no respect, no honesty to each other, no trust. Respect is something that is lacking." Priyanka expresses her belief that a society's resources are concentrated in the hands of the upper class, and "it is up to them how to utilize it, to the positive or the negative." She believes that for social transformations to come into being in Nepal, it is up to people in the upper classes to lead by their actions toward all others in society. Priyanka continues by commenting about the different understanding of what it means to be an individual in Nepal.

> PS: Here, one person is individual, but there in Nepal the whole family is taken as an individual. And then another family, or another caste, another group is totally alien and then there is always looking down, looking up. So there are just fragments, or clusters of groups that are not interconnected. There is lack of the communal feeling.
> AU: So, what you are saying is that in Nepal people look out for their family, but beyond that others have to take care of themselves.
> PS: Yeah, and then it doesn't matter to them. Other groups, other family. It is not their concern. Just look out for yourself and your family. You don't care about others.

Because family is so important in the lifeworld of Nepalese students who participated in this research, it seems that their actions are oriented toward bringing honor, respect and wealth to their family members.

Priyanka's comments make me think of a story my friend Seema shared with me shortly after my conversation with Priyanka. Seema is from northern India where the caste system is very similar to that in Nepal. She and her husband came to the United States from India for higher education. They made the decision to stay in the United States for the job opportunities they have in Silicon Valley. They recently took their youngest daughter who is three years old back to India for the first time. While riding in a taxi, Seema counted the number of people in the taxi because her daughter is learning her numbers. As soon as she said there were five people in the taxi, her daughter corrected her and told her there were six. Seema then realized she hadn't even included the taxi driver as a person in her number game. Similar to Priyanka's comments about Nepalese society, Seema's anecdote raises this question. How can you care for someone you don't even recognize as another human being?

The Promise of Education

In the past, only the children of the royal family were allowed to receive an education. In contemporary Nepal education still does not reach certain marginalized members of society because of their geographic location in rural areas, their gender, their socio-economic status, or a combination of these factors. In Nepali *durbar* means palace. On the façade of Durbar High School, the oldest school in Nepal, the slogan "Education is the path to development" is scrawled in bold letters over one of the archways entering the school's courtyard. As I stop to write a few reflections about this in my journal, I watch students in the courtyard gather in groups, talking and laughing. One girl dressed in her school uniform comes over to say hello and is eager to use her English skills. We talk for a new minutes and I ask her what the

phrase painted over the archway means to her. She says that everyone in Nepal must get a good education and that they must learn how to live in the modern world.

Nishesh Dhungana talks about the relationship between education and development in our conversation. He believes that education will free Nepalese from the oppression of depending on others. He says, "Education is the backbone for everything. So, for society to develop and for the people in our country to develop the most important is education." Nishesh's understanding of development is based on results, the production of goods made possible through technical knowledge. He continues, "At all levels they need to learn, also technical things, like how to make computers or mobiles. So when they finish their school they don't have to rely on somebody to get developed, they can do something of their own."

The day is hot and humid as I pass through the security blockade to visit Mrs. Chitra Lekha Yadav within the heavily-guarded compound where government offices are located. She is deputy speaker of the Nepal House of Representatives, making her the highest-ranking woman in Nepalese politics. Before entering politics, she received her master's degree in English literature and taught at Tribhuvan University. The commitment to education she exhibited in the past is still strong in her present position as a politician. She stands and greets me with a soft-spoken authority when I enter her office and immediately inquires about my journey and offers me a cup of tea as we ease into our conversation.

The office we meet in is a hive of activity as workers and messengers stream in and out during our conversation. It is an important day for the interim government. The deadline to schedule the Constituent Assembly elections is today and no

agreement has been reached for a date for the elections at the time of our conversation. Despite the demands on her time, Chitra takes the time to meet because she is committed to improving education in Nepal. She is concerned about the increasing number of students who are leaving Nepal for higher education. She says, "I think the really important reasons why the students go to United States is that they have faith in the system in the United States. They believe that if they work hard, you know according to their capability, they will get opportunity there." Chitra's hopes for the future of Nepal lie in the youth and developing a political and an educational system which Nepalese believe in. She elaborates further, "So I think here in Nepal as we are talking about creating the New Nepal, we have to be focused on developing the system in which people can have faith. There will be no discrimination. There will be no political instability." She believes it is the responsibility of the government to make education a priority for all members of Nepalese society. She talks about a recent trip she took to the United States and how inspired she was by the recent U.S. education policy No Child Left Behind. She would like to adopt develop similar policies in Nepal. Chitra emphasizes that the children who do not go to school in Nepal do not do so by choice. She says, "They are staying in such sub-human conditions, so how can their parents think about sending them to school?" Education and poverty are two issues which are inextricably linked in Nepal. Imagining new ways for meaningful education to reach those in poverty is critical in education policy.

Chitra explains that members of the Nepalese government cannot even think about democracy succeeding or tackling the challenges of the 21st century unless

education becomes their first priority. I am impressed by Chitra's dedication to education and the efforts she is making in the government to raise awareness and initiate conversations in the public sphere about improving access to education as well as improving the quality of education. Toward the end of our conversation Chitra tells me that she will be in the United States the following week for a conference. She is taking her two children along so they can tour various university and college campuses because she was so impressed by the students, faculty, and classes she saw when she last visited Harvard. She is giving her children the choice to go to the United States for higher education, but she says "I have also told my children if they go to the U.S. to get their education, they have to come back and serve their country. There is no point if they are going to stay there." I leave Chitra's office and ponder the potential irony of the situation if she does indeed send her children to the United States. She wants to create an education system in which people have faith. However, sending her children abroad for their education undermines the sincerity of her message and her efforts.

Navin Pokhrel is a student in his first year at SMSU. He came to SMSU because he has relatives who are already studying at the university. Moreover, his parents wanted him to leave Nepal for higher education because they believe his future employment opportunities will be better if he has a foreign education. He has not been in the United States more than a few months when we meet. He is eighteen years old and had very little independence prior to his departure for the United States. He speaks longingly of going back to Nepal to see his family and to take part in the family life he is nostalgic about. But, the promise of education in the United States

takes precedence over these desires. In talking about education in Nepal he explains, "Our education is not technical at all in the 21st century. It is still only relying on books. I studied in Nepal for twelve years and we only learn book knowledge and whatever the teacher taught in the classroom." Navin tells me what's appealing about education in the United States is the integration of theory and practice into learning, making learning more meaningful than just memorizing information. However, he acknowledges that the situation is slowly transforming in Nepal. In part, those transformations are happening because of students who have gone back to Nepal after studying abroad. "For ten years so many students have gone to the United States to study, even to Europe and Australia. They are certainly learning there and getting a good education and they are bringing that back to Nepal." He concludes with this statement about the importance these students bear in Nepalese society. "They will be really important for the society of Nepal later I think. For education, for technology, for everything." Despite Navin's belief that those who go abroad for their education play an important role in the future of Nepalese society, he admits he plans on spending all of his professional life in the United States, but that he would like to spend the years after his retirement in Nepal.

In our conversation, Bishal BC talks about what he would like to do after he finishes his studies in the United States. He is getting a degree in accounting, but somehow he sees himself working in education when he goes back to Nepal. Because of his educational experiences in the United State, he dreams of transforming education in Nepal so that it is more meaningful to students. He says:

> What I would like to do back in Nepal is first of all, I will try to influence education system. I will try to change in the sense that education is not only

> about going to school and studying books. It is about getting experience, being involved, having a sense of community feeling in you, and then trying to get experience out of it.

In our conversation Bishal speaks with bitterness about his educational experiences in Nepal, and because of his negative experiences he wants to contribute to change that will benefit others. Because he is able to critically look at and talk about traditions in Nepal he can imagine change.

Interpreting Development

To explore questions of identity, solicitude, and imagination it became apparent in the early phases of this research that it would be necessary to uncover the multifarious understandings and interpretations of development research participants have. In doing so, a collective narrative emerges that reveals taken-for-granted beliefs and critical reflection.

AJ Yadav is a graduate student pursuing a master's degree in business at SMSU. He also works as a consultant for an environmental health and safety company. He has been in the United States for almost ten years and was one of the first Nepalese students to come to SMSU. In our conversation he interprets the situation at hand in Nepal in more absolute terms than other research participants. In describing the situation in Nepal he says, "There is nothing there. There is no system. Everybody wants to send their kids somewhere for a better education and a better life. The whole country is destroyed. There is nothing you can do." He mostly blames the political leaders for their failure to change. As they cling to their power and past traditions, they fail to meet the current needs of Nepalese society. He adamantly declares that development cannot happen in Nepal until political stability is achieved.

To do so, he believes that dialogue free from coercion and manipulation must take place. He says, "You got to open your mind and listen what they have to say. They are protective. They don't want others from India, United States or United Nations interfere." Moreover, AJ argues that the development of society cannot occur until people's fundamental needs are taken care of, including food, access to clean water, and access to education.

Shradda Dhungel does not have one interpretation of development. Throughout our conversation, she develops different interpretations and eventually she places herself in the development narrative. For a society, she explains that development essentially means to make improvements in one's living standards. She talks about the development projects she has seen fail in Nepal. She says, "I see people regard development just within their periphery, not go beyond it. So much has been done, but then very less has been brought out from it." Perhaps because of these failed projects in development, she has re-imagined development on a personal level. She says, "I would say development is when you are set free and you have to tackle everything that comes around and you become strong. You learned because you faced it." It is her actions which become more important than her social status. She talks about her experiences in the United States as an important part of her personal development because she no longer has her family surrounding her to make decisions for her and to take care of her. By stepping out of Nepalese society and looking critically to the past and anticipating the future she desires she says, "You start looking at and you see the good aspects of society you come from. You have a desire to change some things and to keep some things because you treasure that thing."

Teres Shrestha is a soft-spoken graduate student working toward her MBA. She has been at SMSU for eight years and she is thinking about what she wants to do after she graduates. She says she wants to open her own restaurant in partnership with her fiancé who is also a Nepalese student at SMSU. When we begin to talk about development, she explains that to her development means "increasing the living standards of people and getting rid of poverty with more job opportunity." This seems to be a standard, taken-for-granted response. However, within a few minutes she begins to imagine and explore different interpretations of development. She begins to talk about the need to improve education and establishing equal rights for all men and women. She begins to relate development to her personal life and places herself in the narrative. She says, "I have more freedom here. Back home in Nepal you have certain restrictions. Even though you are educated, you can't follow your dreams. Back home I would have been married and had kids." Teres came to the United States when she was eighteen and immediately learned to be independent. If she does return to Nepal and opens her own restaurant there, she says she will think about other people's rights more. She is especially concerned about the inequalities and discrimination women face in Nepalese society.

Priyanka Sharma has a bachelor's degree in development studies from Nepal. She is very critical of social development projects in Nepal. She believes the majority have failed because of "lack of participation and people in authority telling others what to do." Instead, she feels that people committed to development should listen and let the people in the community figure out their own needs and plans. She

says, “People may not have the brightest ideas but they know their situation the best and what works for them.”

Bimal Shah speaks cynically about the business of development he has witnessed in Nepal. He has come to visit me at the Shanker Hotel in Kathmandu which is in an area of the city where many INGO and NGO offices, consultants, and embassies are located. He explains, “Development is a profit-oriented business in Nepal. The majority of Nepalese people open the NGO because they want to make money.” He believes most NGOs in Nepal are not sincere in their mission to contribute to social changes that benefit the less fortunate. He is skeptical of their motives because of the failed development projects he has seen. He rants, “They have their meetings in five-star hotels, have good laptops and cars. They organize big conferences, but at the end of the day you have to actually see if people are benefiting from those conferences.”

Bimal wants things to change, and he is looking for innovative ways to address issues in Nepal within his work and his own life. For example, he sees a need to integrate the ministry websites using a holistic master plan to avoid duplication and costs and to make information more easily accessible to citizens. He says, “I decided this was a good time for me to use what I learned in the US. If I don’t raise my voice when something is not right, then what good is it that I studied in the U.S.? I was able to apply what I learned in local sense.” Bimal also approaches the Korean embassy for assistance. He says, “I told them not to give us money. We need expertise from you guys. And they were quite shocked because majority of people who go to foreign embassies ask for funds.” The joint efforts he initiates with Korea

result in ATT developing an investment plan of US $30 million in e-government. Bimal is also thinking about public education and bringing technology to schools. He begins at the local level using his knowledge of the community he grew up in. He sees a need to bring computers to the schools in his local village. He contacts a friend who works at Dell who can get 100 free laptops, but his friend says the cargo costs are too expensive. He explains:

> I said to him, why don't you send two at a time? I think that would be doing a service to our country. If you can just carry two. And I told him we could deal with the customs people here. We will tell them it is for schools. If they think about one hundred laptops and the cargo costs, it will make them frustrated and they will stop trying.

Bimal doesn't let cost deter him, and he finds a way to bring the laptops. The next step is training people to use them and maintain them so they are not dependent on others.

The last morning I am in Kathmandu I meet with Ajit Shah at the headquarters for Lotus Holdings, a socially responsible venture capital firm and business incubator that Ajit's mother founded in 1998. He recently became CEO of the company and is responsible for overseeing their companies in information technology, manufacturing, trading, services, and philanthropy. His brother also returned to Nepal after his studies to work for Lotus Holdings, but returned to the United States because he was too frustrated with the political and social problems in Nepal. Ajit doesn't let the obstacles stop him.

Ajit came to the United States when he was sixteen years old to begin his university studies at SMSU. He says that before coming to the U.S. his life experience consisted of going to school and "being a kid" but that he quickly learned

responsibility, a strong work ethic, and independence as a college student. After getting his bachelor's degree, Ajit worked at an information technology company in Minnesota for a year, at which point he decided he wanted to go back to Nepal because he thought "opportunities available in Nepal were exciting."

Ajit speaks with respect and admiration for his parents. He says, "Basically my mom and dad, they were not too capitalistic. They were more business-social." I ask him what he thinks allowed his family to imagine a business model that integrated social responsibility. He says, "Well, my mom and dad lived in Germany for 14 years. They came back to actually do something for the country." His parents chose to take an ethical approach to business because they believed it was the right thing to do. He continues, "If you want some change in society, you cannot expect other people to do it. I think you should do it yourself. I have become a true believer of the power of one."

Ajit's parents began with carpet-making businesses, one of which is shown in Figure 6 on the following page. His mother also founded Rug Mark in Nepal, an organization which ensures no child labor is used in the manufacturing of carpets. Ajit's parents founded this carpet-making business sixteen years ago and offer incentives based on workers' requests that have created a community of loyal workers. They pay for weavers' children to go to school, they provide an on-site daycare facility for younger children, they provide after-school tutors, and they pay their workers three times the average wage. While other companies in Nepal in the same industry have failed, Ajit's family's carpet-making companies have prospered because of their commitment to workers. He says:

> It is about sustaining an industry. It is about family being able to live their lives through this business. It is about people getting jobs, about people actually working with us and ultimately retiring. It is not like they come and work for us, make some money, and then we say bye-bye. A lot of businesses, companies in Nepal are more short-sighted. My parents they have always been very long-sighted . . . We have seen growth. These days we are seeing a lot of our weavers' children graduating with highest degrees. My mom feels very proud about that.

Figure 6. Foundation Carpets Company in Kathmandu

I find it interesting that Ajit uses the phrase "work with" in opposition to "work for" because this little difference of prepositions signifies a dramatic shift in orientation toward the other.

Ajit bemoans the social crises in Nepal. He says that "there are no ethics anymore" and "it is all financial because people are so money-oriented" but takes solace in the approach his family has taken to business. Through their venture capital firm, they are committed to investing in other companies which place the importance of community and caring ahead of profits.

In conversation with Nepalese students at SMSU, I share Ajit's story as an example of development guided by an ethic of care for others because they each have difficulties imagining how development guided by solicitude could transform Nepal. Bishal's reaction is indicative of others. He says, "That concept really makes sense. There is a sense of responsibility and belongingness. People will work hard because they feel appreciated and business will explode."

Reflections on Identity

Daman Nath Dhungana declares, "Students who go abroad are always in conflict. They are 50 percent in the United States, and they are 50 percent with their country. They are half-hearted. They are in social conflict." For Daman, conflict represents a negative tension as national identities come head to head. The way Daman talks about identity in relation to students who go abroad does not reflect what these students at SMSU say about identity.

In our conversation Bishal talks at length about identity and how he has grown because of his experiences in the United States. He understands where he comes from better than if he had stayed in Nepal and is open to new ideas. He says, "The foundation stays the same. You have been born and raised over there, so you will have that kind of mentality. But, it changes over time." Teres has a similar understanding of identity. She says, "I still think I am Nepali. I don't feel that I am American. But, there are certain things that have been Americanized, like I don't fear social restrictions anymore." For both Teres and Bishal the traditions and beliefs they learned from family and community in Nepal inform their worldview. Their

experiences abroad open up new reflections about identity, who they are in the world, and allow for change and growth to occur.

When Priyanka talks about identity she understands herself in relation to others, especially her family, and to Nepalese society. When she came to the United States she says, "Everything was really different and everything I took for granted suddenly became important. Traditions, values, family." For Priyanka, being in the United States does not represent a conflict. It provides the opportunity for her to remember her past, reflect on the future she wants, and make changes in the present moment to work toward that imagined future.

The dialectic between being Nepalese and being other-than-Nepalese is reconciled in Bishal's narrative, bringing about new understanding and ways of being in the world. For example, because of his experiences in the United States Bishal learns to critique national narratives and myths about identity. He says, "Before I came here, I think Americans are way too superior to what we are. But, over the course of time I become confident about myself. It is all about me, my trying." He eventually sees himself going back to Nepal and becoming involved in community-based projects which will benefit young students like him. He says, "When I was in my grade school I was one of the three poorest students in my class . . . I can help others have hope and determination that they can work hard and succeed." Bishal's newfound self-esteem opens up the potential for him to be in caring relationships with others based on solicitude.

Looking Ahead: An Uncertain Future

For the Nepalese students at SMSU, the future is a constant source of conversation, reflection, and tension. When I ask Bishal where he imagines himself in the future, he immediately responds, "I cannot imagine myself living in the United States forever, and I cannot imagine myself being able to go back to Nepal and live there to earn my living . . . I can't imagine Nepal being stable in my lifetime. I won't imagine that." However, as he talks about the situation in Nepal he begins to imagine a future in his lifetime where stability is possible and the conditions necessary for that to happen. He also begins to talk about the knowledge and experiences he could bring back to Nepal to contribute to the transformation of Nepal, especially in education. Through the narrative he emplots, Bishal is able to make sense of the events in Nepal and his place in that narrative.

Navin is concerned about the risk involved in going back to Nepal. Because his family has made so many sacrifices for him to study in the United States, he thinks maybe he should stay in the United States because there is no guarantee he will get a good job in Nepal. He says, "There is a certainty if students from Nepal will stay in the United States for four years they are going to get a good degree and get a good job." I ask him if political stability would change the way he feels about going back to Nepal. He exclaims, "Oh yeah! Not just me, but everybody would want to be there. They will be with their family. And making good society, good civilization, and making the country better." When I ask him if he sees himself being able to bring about change and stability, he says no. "I don't have anything in my hands. It is all with the people there." In part, Navin feels like he is powerless. He feels alienated by the political system because he won't be able to vote in the Constituent

Assembly elections scheduled for April 10, 2008. Navin is in his freshman year at SMSU. In the three years to come during his studies the political situation in Nepal may change dramatically, allowing him to return and "go back to my country and do something good."

Summary

In Chapter Five the data from research conversations was presented in the form of a text which is made up of the participants' personal narratives. My voice as a researcher is present but does not dominate the text. In Chapter Six the data presented in this chapter will be analyzed through the lens of critical hermeneutic theory according to the research categories identity, solicitude, and imagination. Through these interpretations a new story that implies an ethical horizon will emerge.

CHAPTER VI: ANALYSIS OF DATA

Preparing the Way

Some Nepalese students express a certain amount of surprise that I want to focus my research on their experiences. Sanjeev's anecdote reflects the experience of many Nepalese students in the United States, especially rural Minnesota, when he says, "Some guys asked me where I was from and I told them Nepal. They said, 'Nepal? Where's that?' We have to tell them where it is. They think we are part of India or China." Several female students initially tell me I should talk to their father, brother, or boyfriend because he knows more about these issues than she does, but I reassure them that they are doing a fine job telling their own stories. For, as Ricoeur reminds us (1992: 115), it is through narrative that we gain a sense of the "*connectedness of life*." The invitation to tell their stories gives participants the opportunity to make sense of their lives and the socio-historical context they live in through narrative and the acts of interpretation, reflection, and critique.

Moreover, during the initial stages of this research Priyanka along with other Nepalese students gathered in the International Student Services Office at SMSU is curious as to why I am not conducting a survey for this research. Gadamer's interpretation of effective history sheds light on this inquiry. He writes (2004b: 300):

> It [history] determines in advance both what seems to us worth inquiring about and what will appear as an object of investigation, and we more or less forget half of what is really there- in fact, we miss the whole truth of the phenomenon- when we take its immediate appearance as the whole truth.

Based on their beliefs about research informed by their past traditions, the students' expectations are that I will gather information about the issue being researched through tools such as a survey or a questionnaire and then make recommendations for

solving the problems based on the scientific results. This is the approach they have seen taken toward research in Nepal in the past, and they haven't critiqued this tradition to determine whether or not is continued to be relevant. Their questions make me think about my role as a researcher. I come to the understanding that it is important to tell participants a compelling story about this research paradigm throughout our conversations to make it meaningful to them as they are engaged in the research and to others who read this research.

The students' questions allow us to enter into a conversation about a different orientation toward research, an orientation in which participants such as ourselves work together in and through language to unveil taken-for-granted beliefs, what Ricoeur (1984: 54-64) refers to as pre-understanding of the world or $mimesis_1$, so we can truly and authentically hear each other and come to new understandings about ourselves, about others, and about the shared world in which we live. These new understandings allow us to explore possibilities for future action, what Ricoeur (1984: 70) refers to as $mimesis_3$, which is grounded in ethical responsibility toward others. Teres comes to this revelation when she thinks about going back to Nepal and opening a restaurant where she has her own employees. She says, "I will be more liberal and think about people's rights more." This is the emplotment of the proposed world in her present narrative, what Ricoeur refers to as $mimesis_2$ (1984: 64-70).

This capacity to act in a given context guided by practical wisdom is the fruit of critical hermeneutic inquiry. The socio-political situations in Nepal require action because too many people are either suffering in poverty and oppression or leaving the country if they can, as research participants testified to in their narratives. For

example Navin exclaims, "Recently these revolutions are giving really, really, bad things around society like people killing people and I don't know what the revolution is for!" There is no universal solution to the crises Nepalese are facing today. Narrative engages the imagination and summons us to be and to act differently because of our ethical responsibility to others (Ricoeur 1988: 249). Hermeneutic inquiry, therefore, is a research approach which is particularly meaningful to interpret the situation at hand in Nepal and make judgments about ethical action that should be taken.

Another important part of critical hermeneutic inquiry for this research is that it places me and the research participants in an equal relationship. Nepalese students have grown up with an orientation toward the West that creates an unequal relationship where developed countries and its members are placed in a position of superiority or expert status and members of developing countries are systematically subordinated. Bishal says, "Before I came here I have one perception in mind. Americans are superior to what we are." This sentiment works against the unifying concept of community central to critical hermeneutic inquiry if participants to see me, the researcher, as an objective authority figure.

Participatory research grounded in language and interpretation transforms that dichotomy and forms a community in which relationships between the participants and myself can develop and grow over time (Herda 1999: 89). Research participants such as AJ, Bishal, Navin, Priyanka, Sanjeev, and Teres, who express through their narratives despondency because of the social, political, or economic turmoil in Nepal are engaged in the research and come to new understandings about self and society

through participatory research grounded in critical hermeneutic inquiry. For research participants Bimal and Ajit who have returned to Nepal and found ways to make their experiences and knowledge gained in the United States meaningful in their personal and professional lives, the opportunity to share their affirming stories through this research can spark the imagination and hope of others.

A revisiting of the research process as it unfolded in this given context has set the stage for the analysis of the research categories of identity, solicitude, and imagination. The analysis of the data through the lens of critical hermeneutic theory re-interprets the data, and from it a new and compelling story emerges.

The Narrative of Identity

As members of Nepalese society struggle during the current period of rapid and destabilizing changes, questions of identity, both personal and collective, must be addressed. Surveys and questionnaires cannot fulfill that ontological need. The notions of identity that emerged in conversations and were presented in Chapter Five are analyzed in this section using Habermas' theory of the lifeworld and communicative action and Ricoeur's theory of conflict in political institutions. Ricoeur's theory of narrative identity is also used to analyze the notion of identity and parallels to Turner's theory of liminality are drawn.

Changing Lifeworld

In Nepal there have been *struggles for change* by the oppressed and enlightened. Shradda calls for a change in orientation about identity and traditional beliefs about the social hierarchy. She says, "I think people should be treated because of their intellectual ability and potential more than what they possess." There have

also been *struggles against change* by certain members of society who have traditionally held positions of power, mostly the higher-caste elders in society. For example, Surya complained about politicians who have refused to change their practices which politicize schools and disrupt education for fear of losing their constituency. The tension between these struggles is ripping apart the social fabric of Nepal.

To better understand these changes, Habermas' (1987: 124) theory of the lifeworld is relevant to the analysis. The lifeworld consists of the shared understandings, traditions, and beliefs that a community or society develops over time through mutual understanding and communicative action. Habermas (1989: 176-181) writes of three domains of disturbances in the lifeworld. Disturbances in the domain of cultural reproduction results in the loss of meaning for cultures, withdrawal of legitimation for society, and a crisis in orientation and education for individuals. Disturbances in the domain of social integration result in the unsettling of collective identity for culture, anomie for society, and alienation for individuals. Finally, disturbances in the domain of socialization results in a rupture of tradition for cultures, withdrawal of motivation for society, and psychopathologies for individuals.

These disturbances and crises are relevant to the situation at hand in Nepal. The narratives presented in the previous chapter regarding the political and social instability, rejections of the traditional paradigm of development, and apprehension about the future are testimonies to these disturbances. Daman talks about the violence and terror from the perspective of a human rights activist who has suffered oppression through imprisonment for voicing his point of view. He calls for the need

to teach Nepal's youth, his country's successors, "peace, non-violence, and the democratic process," as a means to transform Nepal. Bishal talks about the terror as a lived experience. He says, "There was huge riot in Nepal. I was in high school and I had to run for my life. Even a little spark ends up burning everything." His experiences caused him to leave Nepal and now he refuses to go back unless political stability is achieved. Cultural reproduction, social integration and socialization have all been ruptured. As Nepalese such as the participants in this research come to understand themselves in a modern world and critique the traditions which no longer make sense, many members of the older generation remain embedded in a system of understanding the world that is informed by traditions and beliefs regarding status, power, and difference. The Nepalese diaspora is growing. Disenfranchised youth are fleeing the country to look for the promise of a better life for themselves in new lands. Some members of the older generation such as Surya Dhungel, Daman Nath Dhungana, and Chitra Lekha Yadav are striving for positive social change in Nepal through their work in their respective organizations and political institutions.

Habermas' (1989, 1984) theory of communicative action oriented toward mutual understanding between all members of society regardless of age, socio-economic status, or gender must replace violence and terror so that Nepalese can emerge from these crises with a new understanding of self and society based in caring relationship with the other. The voices of the research participants in the narratives presented demand this. They want to be able to trust others in society, to share knowledge, and to share common values. The alternative is a perpetual state of

conflict and violence that further alienates individuals, degrades social identity, and results in complete anarchy in society.

Conflict can be productive and unifying in terms of collective identity as explored by Ricoeur (1992: 251-260). He discusses three levels of conflicts regarding power and domination in the political realm. Participants in the research overwhelmingly spoke out for democracy in Nepal as necessary for social change to take place. Ricoeur explains that the first level of conflict involves the deliberation and discussion involved in determining what spheres of justice are to be given priority. This conflict is an essential part of the democratic process. Ricoeur (1992: 258) writes, "Democracy is not a political system without conflicts but a system in which conflicts are open and negotiable in accordance with recognized rules of arbitration." At present in Nepal, one of the issues which must be dealt with is how to remember the victims who have suffered because of the civil war and ethnic tensions and how to remove the perpetrators of crimes against humanity from impunity. The second level of conflict involves the debate about good government where ideological and emotionally-charged words such as "liberty" and "equality" should not succumb to propaganda, but should be clarified (1992: 258-259). The third level of conflict involves what Ricoeur refers to as a legitimation crisis in political institutions, which he defines as "the lack of any basis that appears to affect the very choice of a government of the people, by the people, and for the people," (1992: 260).

In the past, decisions about government have not been made by Nepalese citizens. The legitimation crisis in Nepal's political institutions can be overcome if

the Constituent Assembly elections take place in April 2008 as scheduled in an environment free from coercion and fear. Moral formalism will not resolves these conflicts, but conversations in the public sphere guided by communicative action as defined by Habermas (1979) and Ricoeur's (1992: 172) concept of the ethical intention "to live the good life with and for others in just institutions" opens up the possibilities to overcome conflict through dialogue and being in relationship with others, not through violence. If the legitimation crisis in government is overcome in Nepal, research participants overwhelmingly said they would return to Nepal. Whether or not they decide to go back should be a decision they can make that isn't based on fear or a sense of moral duty, but a desire to live in community with others.

Changing Self

As participants engaged in the research conversations, they imagined and constructed their identity drawing from memories of the past and expectations of the future through narrative. In his theory of narrative, Ricoeur (1992: 140-168) argues that narrative is where we will find the answers to questions about identity because it is in the interpretation of life events that we imagine and create our identity through the stories we tell and how we emplot those stories. In other word, narrative is the mediator of identity of the self. Ricoeur (1992: 140) writes, "The genuine nature of narrative identity discloses itself . . . in the dialectic of selfhood and sameness. In this sense, this dialectic represents the major contribution of narrative theory to the constitution of the self." *Ipse* identity includes self-constancy, but also permits change to occur within a lifetime.

In discussing identity, Teres and Bishal are examples of two participants who talked about how they had changed over time and how the experiences they had in the United States contributed to their identity and helped them grow. This corresponds to Turner's (1989: 99) notion of the marginal or liminal state in which individuals find ways to grow, transform, and reformulate old elements in new patterns. It is extremely important for Nepalese such as the research participants to find ways to deal with rupture and inconstancy, for instability was a dominant theme in all of the narratives. But, through narrative the seemingly discordant events of one's life gain coherence in the telling of the story and research participants find a way to address the instability. Narrative is the intermediary between description and prescription (Ricoeur 1992: 114). Through the shared narratives, research participants describe the various forms of instability and make judgments about how they and others should act to address those instabilities. Some call for democracy, an end to corruption, more focus on education, and an end to widespread discrimination and oppression based on ethnicity and caste. The research participants represent the privileged, the elite in Nepalese society, and they recognize the need for social transformations to take place. They want to contribute to those social changes but struggle to reconcile those desires with their want of financial security they believe cannot be achieved in Nepal.

The college years tend to be highly reflective for students as they broaden their understanding of the world around them and reinterpret their being in the world. This process is intensified for international students like Bishal, Sanjeev, and AJ as they continuously compare and contrast their traditions, collective histories, and value

systems with those held by members of the society where they are now studying, and has the potential of de-alienating the other. Kearney (2002: 140) writes, "It is precisely this double-take of difference and identity- experiencing oneself as another and the other as oneself- that provokes a reversal of our natural attitude to things and opens us to novel ways of seeing and being." Considering interpretations of identity for Nepalese living and studying abroad is an integral part of re-imagining and reconfiguring the future for a country where the past and present are mired in turmoil and unrest. For, as Kearney (2002: 140) writes, "If we possess narrative sympathy- enabling us to see the world from another's point of view- we cannot kill. If we do not, we cannot love."

Solicitude

The shared world must be interpreted in terms of the phenomenon of caring for others through solicitude. Heidegger (1962: 237) writes, "Being-in-the-world is essentially care . . . and Being with the Dasein-with of Others as we encounter it within-the-world could be taken as solicitude." Solicitude is more than a moral duty to act with concern toward others. Development practices in Nepal have generally exploited the moral duty, creating a context in which "the Other can become one who is dominated and dependent, even if this domination is kept hidden from him," (Heidegger 1967: 158).

The legacy of development in Nepal may very well be dependency as part of one's being in the world for many members of Nepalese society who do not strive to unveil hidden prejudices (Gadamer 2004b: 270-271) which may prevent them from coming to new understandings. In our conversation AJ talks about financial reform in

Nepal and unknowingly provides an example of Heidegger's hidden domination in his belief system. He says, "Have a couple of Americans, have some British down there, let the talented people run the finance department and see their effect." The expectation for others to take care of the problems facing the Nepalese state and society today is expressed in many of the research narratives. Most participants are waiting for the problems to be solved before going back to Nepal to live, and their parents are encouraging them to pursue opportunity outside of the country. Chen and Bartnett's (2000: 452) conclusion that "large portions of international students, who have the potential of producing innovations to alter the world's uneven distribution of wealth, may be recruited into the core," indicates that this situation is not unique to students from Nepal. This notion of solicitude as leaping in for the other and creating a situation of dependency and domination causes me to look at my role as an instructor of English to international students. Creating a context in the classroom where international students engage in critical discussion to unveil taken-for-granted beliefs and traditions which may no longer be needed could open up new possibilities for being in the world.

Research participants were asked to explore a different interpretation of development guided by solicitude that is based on self-esteem and respect for the other (Ricoeur 1992: 190) and opens up the "potentiality-for-Being" for the other (Heidegger 1967: 158-159). They were also asked to consider how this change in orientation could transform Nepal. The research participants in the United States struggle to come up with contexts in which they see this already happening or even to imagine it could happen at all given the current socio-political situation. Bishal's

response, “I don’t see that kind of situation occurring in Nepal for at least hundreds and hundreds of years,” is a particularly strong reaction against the possibility of this refiguration taking place. Ricoeur (1998: 143) writes, “Appropriation . . . is understanding at and through distance.” For Bishal and others like him the inability to imagine social change in Nepal guided by the ethic of care for others may take more time.

On the other hand, both Bimal and Ajit talk about their own experiences after returning to Nepal and tell very compelling stories about solicitude as they see it in their lives and their work. Ajit’s story is particularly compelling. As they founded their carpet-making business Ajit’s parents talked to workers to find out what their needs were and then offered incentives based on the workers’ requests. In doing so, they have created a community working together toward a desired future. Ajit says, “It is about family being able to live their lives through this business . . .We have seen growth. These days we are seeing a lot of our weavers’ children graduating with highest degrees.” The ethic of care that guides Ajit’s family’s business opens up the potentiality-for-Being that is solicitude. I am inspired by his story and share it with others. I think about my actions as an English teacher toward international students and imagine ways I can act in solitude that opens up possibilities for their potentiality-for-Being in those relationships.

Imagination

The idea that life events can be interpreted is a liberating one, and it plays an important role in the theory of narrative identity and imagination. Kearney (1998: 149) writes, “Narratives produced by imagination all provide us with ‘imaginative

variations' of the world, thereby offering us the freedom to conceive of the world in other ways and to undertake forms of action which might lead to its transformation." When we can imagine a different or better world because of reading a text, we may be more apt to change our actions to bring us one step closer to that proposed world.

The refiguring of plots in life stories can engender positive changes for participants in their personal lives and communities, such as was seen with Ajit and Bishal when they returned to Nepal. Navin, who has not returned to Nepal, is much more uncertain about the future because he is waiting, as if in a state of limbo, for the political situation to stabilize. Narrative is essential for him to exercise his imagination and open up Ricoeur's (1984: 64) "kingdom of as if" through emplotment. When asked how he imagines bringing his knowledge and experience gained in the United States back to Nepal he is able to explore the world of possibilities. After reflecting for a moment he says, "It would be good, taking the technology or cultural values and everything, civil obedience back to Nepal." As understanding unfolds over time, Navin and others will have opportunities to refigure and emplot their life stories to bring them closer to the proposed world they desire.

Overwhelmingly participants critically reflected on the political and social instability in Nepal amidst increasing internal and external demands to develop, all leading toward an uncertain future. The uncertainty is in some cases exhilarating because it liberates research participants to explore the hypothetical possibilities of being in the world. They believe they can use this freedom to break away from undesirable traditions in their own lives, especially caste ideology. Daman comments about overcoming persistent discrimination through education and democracy.

Sanjeev, Bishal and Nishesh all speak about the inequity in Nepalese society that is based on caste ideology and explore through narrative ways to change this tradition that is no longer needed. Parish (1996: 1999) argues that it is in the realm of the moral imagination that caste ideology that legitimizes identities of difference can be overcome and for social change to take place.

As members of Nepalese society attempt to move forward in the peace process, narratives about violence and injustices suffered during the civil war are emerging. All of the research participants without exception referred to violence inflicted on others in their lifetimes in our conversations. They may not have been eye-witnesses to the violence, but they have lived it through the stories of others. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Nepal is charged with bringing the facts to the public regarding the human rights abuses which occurred during the armed conflict, to bring perpetrators of crimes to justice, and to compensate victims. As witnesses to events have the opportunity to tell their stories through testimony, they "deploy the capacity of the imagination to place the events before our eyes, as if we were there," (Ricoeur 1999a: 16). The testimonies of victims who have suffered will be necessary for the process of reconciliation in the social imagination to take place.

Summary

In this chapter, the data presented in Chapter Five was analyzed through the lens of critical hermeneutic theory in the context of the research categories identity, solicitude, and imagination. From new understanding arose critique and a call for social action. Implications for action in policy and curriculum will be discussed in

the final chapter along with a summary, suggestions for future research, my final reflection, and a concluding comment.

CHAPTER VII: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH, PERSONAL REFLECTION, CONCLUSION

Summary

The need for research that explores the experiences of Nepalese students in American universities and colleges was determined in Chapter One of this dissertation. The number of Nepalese students coming to the United States in recent years has soared. Political instability, social instability, and disruptions in education were shown to have influenced students' decisions to go abroad for their education. The trend at SMSU does not seem to have changed despite the signing of the peace accord between Maoists and the interim government in 2006. The spring 2008 enrollment figures at SMSU show the highest number of Nepalese students to date.

Literature was used to explore the history, traditions, and beliefs which contribute to the collective history Nepalese students share in Chapter Two. The volatility of the political situation and recurring violence have been a major obstacle to widespread social change efforts. The educational system was severely compromised by the civil war as teachers and students were abducted, tortured, and in some cases killed by both Maoist rebels and Nepalese soldiers. Despite billions having been spent in foreign aid in Nepal for the cause of development, almost a third of the overall population still lives in poverty and only 49 percent of the population over 15 can read and write. Poverty continues to be a predominantly rural phenomenon in Nepal, but Kathmandu has become the new urban home to many people displaced and uprooted by violence and terror in the rural areas.

Literature relevant to international education, development, and the critical hermeneutic concepts of identity, solicitude and imagination was reviewed in Chapter Three. Higher education in the United States attracts more international students that any other country in the world despite the lack of a national approach to international education in this country. Increased security measures since the terrorist attacks on the United States in 2001 have affected the issuance of student visas. Global competition for international students has increased with other English-speaking countries vying for them and their tuition dollars. Development theory traditionally has placed an emphasis on economic and technological progress, using Western frameworks as a model for developing countries. Development efforts in Nepal have often failed because development organizers have not included recipients in the development process to determine what needs are and how those needs can be met. A culture of dependency has been created and the need to explore alternative interpretations of development was determined. Identity, solicitude, and imagination were explored as critical hermeneutic concepts which informed the research categories.

In Chapter Four the research protocol that was used for this dissertation in the context of a participatory research paradigm informed by critical hermeneutics was described. The conceptual framework drawing from the works of Ricoeur, Kearney, Heidegger, Gadamer, and Habermas was developed. The research process involving the collection of data in the forms of research conversations and documents, and the approach to the analysis of this data were also delineated. My background as a researcher concluded that chapter.

The presentation of data in Chapter Five was done in the form of a narrative. By interpreting the transcripts of the research conversations as a cohesive entirety and identifying themes which emerged, a text was created. The interweaving of the research participants' narratives in this text created a rich tapestry describing the Nepalese state and society, the promise of education, interpretations of development, reflections on identity and the uncertain future.

In Chapter Six, the data were analyzed through the lens of critical hermeneutic theory, creating a new and compelling story for social change in Nepal. As the world in which Nepalese changes, research participants showed through their narratives that they are imagining new ways to be in relationships with others as they reject caste ideologies which persist in Nepalese society. The data analysis points to several implications for policy and curriculum which will be discussed in the next section.

Implications

During the research process, implications for both policy and curriculum emerged from the data and the data analysis. These implications are guided by ethical imperatives, to do what appears to be right in the given context. Because affairs of the state are at the heart of the crises in Nepal, political imperatives are also taken into consideration.

Implications for Policy

Many of the research participants complained about the disruption of education in Nepal due to political instability and political interference in education. The Nepalese government should develop a national policy which aims to depoliticize institutions of primary, secondary and higher education in Nepal so that

schools once again become places for learning rather than recruiting grounds for political party members or soldiers. Students need to feel that school is a safe environment in order for learning to take place.

Research participants Navin and Bishal complained about the lack of integration of theory and practice in Nepalese education. One way in which to address this lacuna would be to reinstate the National Development Service program (Messerschmidt, Yadama and Salwil 2007; Messerschmidt and Yadama 2004) that was discussed in Chapter Three of this research at both the graduate and undergraduate levels, starting with students in the field of education and then expanding to other fields of study.

All research participants discussed the violence which members of Nepalese society have suffered during the course of the armed conflict. It is a part of their collective memory. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Nepal is charged with *bringing the facts* to the public regarding the gross violation of human rights and crimes against humanity which occurred during the armed conflict, to bring perpetrators of those crimes to justice, and to compensate victims. In remembering the past, conflicting interpretations and memories about the historical events can arise (Ricoeur 1999a: 13). The reconciliation process can't be just about *the facts*. Victims of violence must be allowed to give testimony. Through the expressive function of language members of society can work toward forgiveness, toward forgetting when necessary, and toward remembering those who have suffered. Research participants were not direct victims of violence, but the violence inflicted on others is remembered and lamented by them. For the next government to have legitimacy it must find ways

to deal with the injustices of the past. The work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission could bring some of these injustices to light and open up possibilities for healing to take place, as a nation and as individuals.

Non-Resident Nepalese [NRNs] make up a growing community. The Nepalese government should develop policy which provides incentives for these Nepalese citizens to contribute their skills and knowledge to social transformation in Nepal through tax incentives and opportunities for collaborative work with Nepalese educators. However, resistance from the local businesspeople, politicians and professors can make the collaborative efforts difficult. Surya explains:

> If they [NRNs] say they are going to come and they would be very happy to support the local businessmen, they will be fine. They will be welcomed. But, the moment they say they are going to come and stay here then he becomes one of the candidates to compete with local businessmen. It is the same in politics and education.

Conversations in the public sphere must take place which include both NRNs and local Nepalese to allow for opportunities to come to new understandings to arise through the communicative act. Koirala's (2004: 174-180) discussion of projects the Nepalese diaspora in the Bay area of California are involved in is indicative of the collaborative social change that Nepalese abroad can be part of in Nepal.

As outlined in the review of literature regarding the internationalization of higher education in the United States, there is no national policy regarding international education. Because more international students come to the United States than any other country in the world, the United States government should develop a national policy which promotes international education and provides adequate funding for it.

However, in the absence of national policy individual universities and colleges should develop their own international education policy. To develop a meaningful policy, members of the learning community including administrators, professors, domestic and international students, and staff as well as members of the surrounding community where the university or college is located should be included in dialogue on the subject of international education.

Because international students are not allowed to work off-campus except in rare cases when exemption is granted because of economic hardship, members of the host institution administrative team should be aware of the number of on-campus jobs available in relation to the demand for these jobs. Efforts to increase employment opportunities on-campus for international students should continuously be discussed and evaluated as well. In addition, funding for any programs and initiatives related to international education and international students should be allocated according to the needs of the organization. In the case of SMSU, the growth of the international student population was unanticipated; consequently, funding for relevant services and support had not been projected.

Implications for Curriculum

Surya made the recommendation in our conversation that ethic and civic education should be part of the curriculum in Nepal. I would add that communicative rationality should be taught as well. Herda (1999: 67) writes in reference to communicative rationality, "If learning is carried on at a reflective critical level, forms of reasoning and argumentation may be learned by others and developed within a cultural and political tradition. They could be actualized in specific education

plans." I think that teaching students at a young age how to communicate through language and work through conflict in this manner will result in less violence when they mature. Members of society will be able to recognize the force of the better argument and accept it.

International students such as the ones who come to SMSU from Nepal need extensive orientation upon their arrival at the university to orient them to life in an American college or university. Faculty members, administrators, previous international students, and American students should be involved in the development of this orientation curriculum. Areas which should be covered based on my experience with international students include 1) what to expect living in a dorm, 2) expectations for learning and interacting in an American classroom including an introduction to the concepts of academic honesty and plagiarism, 3) an overview of support services such as counselors, learning centers, peer mentors, library facilities and computer facilities and 4) an orientation about life in the greater community including how to open a bank account, where to shop, where and how to get a driver's license and state rules about carrying car insurance, and how to deal with extreme weather conditions. These suggestions are not exhaustive, but cover some of the fundamental concerns international students have when they come. In hermeneutic terms, their worldview is vastly different and the implicit should be made as explicit as possible to make the transition into life at an American university or college as smooth as possible.

Curriculum for teacher education should also be developed which addresses concerns they have when teaching courses with international students in them.

Dialogue with professors needs to be initiated which seeks to discover what those concerns are. This teacher education curriculum could be presented to faculty as part of a campus-wide professional development effort. This is particularly important for professors and administrators at a university such as SMSU which is not accustomed to having such large numbers of international students enrolled in their school.

Future Research

When I was in Kathmandu, I was only able to meet with three former students from Minnesota who returned to Nepal for work. I think their conversations were the richest because these participants had experience applying what they had learned in the United States in their personal and professional lives in Nepal. For the participants I spoke with who were students at SMSU it was somewhat difficult for them to imagine how they would apply their new understandings and experiences going back since none of them had any concrete plans to go back. Also, many of them had little or no work experience. Therefore, I would recommend that future research be conducted that focused on Nepalese who studied abroad and who have gone back to Nepal for work. I think it would be especially fruitful to include participants who are women.

Conversations were used as the data for this research. Using written text as the primary source of data would add another dimension to the research. In many colleges and universities, international students whose English proficiency does not meet certain standards are required to take courses to develop their language skills. Oftentimes, these courses are writing courses because they are judged on their ability

to communicate effectively through writing. Using student writing samples from such a course that addressed the research questions could be a rich source of data.

Personal Reflections

This research began as an exploration of my interest in the growing Nepalese international student population in the United States. More specifically, I wanted to learn more about these students from Nepal who were choosing to study in increasingly large numbers in a rural setting such as the one where Southwest Minnesota State University is found. Being an instructor of English to students who do not speak English as their native language, I have learned to look beyond the content of my teaching, an intense focus on learning language, to language as a medium through which we are engaged to explore the social, political, and economic contexts we live in.

Adult learners bring with them to the learning process a history of traditions, beliefs, values and an orientation toward the world and others. Through language new understandings can emerge and the space for critique and action oriented toward social change becomes possible. For students such as the Nepalese who do come from a country plagued with poverty and instability, social change is necessary. Whether or not these students will be a part of the social change is in their hands. Hopelessness expressed in the research conversations by participants could affect their capacity to act. However, narrative offers a way for these students to explore the world of possibilities and imagine a future they can work toward. I have become a firm believer in the power of narrative to open up new worlds of possibilities.

This research has compelled me in many ways to take action that is guided by the ethic of care for the students who were participants in this research and others like them. In April 2008 I will meet with the Provost at SMSU to discuss the possibility of developing a curriculum for teacher education that would be presented during a campus-wide professional development seminar. The curriculum would address the issues faculty and administrators are facing as ever-increasing numbers of students from Nepal are present in their classrooms.

Concluding Comments

All societies experience change over time. Nepalese inhabit a world of competing narratives about the past and future. A critical hermeneutic approach to this research did not seek to declare solutions to the social, political, or economic problems in Nepal; rather, it intended to open up new worlds of possibilities which emerged from the conversations. This research aspired to encourage a new orientation toward understandings between self and others both abroad and in Nepal that has implications for ethical action; action that begins with the individual. This research allowed both the researcher and the research participants to imagine a future different than we had imagined before that we could work toward.

I conclude with these words for the reader. Ricoeur (1988: 249) writes, **"**It belongs to the reader, now an agent, an initiator of action, to choose among the multiple proposals of ethical justice brought forth by reading."

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APPENDICES

Appendix A - Letter of Introduction

Date

Participant's Name
Address

Dear Mr./Ms.,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in an exploration of my dissertation topic. As you know, the constant state of unrest in Nepal among students in higher education over the past decade has caused an increasing number of students from Nepal to pursue degrees in higher education abroad. This research proposes to explore the complex relationships between identity, imagination and solicitude in hopes of moving towards a new understanding between self and others both abroad and in Nepal.

I am inviting international students from Nepal at Southwest Minnesota State University to discuss their experiences and opinions regarding the issues stated above. By engaging in such conversations, I hope that this research will have later implications for Nepal and its citizens as they face a new horizon of peace and stability. In addition, this research will better inform educators and administrators in the United States about Nepalese international students.

In addition to the opportunity to share ideas, I am seeking your permission to record and transcribe our conversations. By signing the consent form, our conversation will act as data for the analysis of the context I have described. Once transcribed, I will provide you with a copy of our conversation so you may look it over. You may add or delete any section of the conversation at that time. After I have received your approval, I will use our conversation to support my analysis.

While the conversations and transcripts are collaborative, the writing that comes from them is the researcher's product, and may include some editing by the respondent. By signing the consent form, you agree to forgo anonymity under the described conditions. You also acknowledge that you have been given complete and clear information about the research, and that you have the option to make the decision at the outset about whether or not to participate. You have the option to withdraw at any time without any adverse consequences.

Below you will find a series of proposed questions. These questions are primarily for use as guidelines to direct our conversation. My hope is that our conversation

provides an opportunity for us to learn together through the exploration of the topic I have described.

Reflecting upon your experiences, please consider the following questions:

- How do you, here in America, see yourself in relation to your homeland?
- In your opinion, how has the culture of development in Nepal shaped the identity of Nepalese? What are the implications?
- How could development guided by solicitude (respect and esteem between self and others) transform Nepal? Have you seen any examples of this?
- Can you imagine yourself living forever in the United States? Can you imagine yourself living forever in Nepal? Can you imagine yourself living in both?
- How can your cultural understanding of work in addition to your experiences and education in the United States contribute to a new world of possibilities for Nepal's future?

I would like to thank you again for your willingness to meet with me. Please call me at xxx-xxx-xxxx or email me at xxxxxxxxxxxx if you have any further questions. I look forward to seeing you soon.

Sincerely,

Kristine Nelson
Researcher, Doctoral Student
University of San Francisco
Organization and Leadership

Appendix B - Letter of Confirmation for Meeting

Date

Participant's Name
Address

Dear Mr./Ms.,

I would like to sincerely thank you for the opportunity to have a conversation with you about your experiences and perspectives as an international student from Nepal studying in the United States. I am confirming our meeting on _____. Please let me know if you need to change our arranged date, time, our place for the meeting.

With your permission, I will record our conversation, transcribe the recordings into a written text, and submit the transcript to you for review. I would like to discuss our conversation again and include any follow-up thoughts and comments you may have. Please know that the data for this research are not confidential.

The exchange of ideas in conversation is the premise of participatory research. This process encourages you to comment on, add to, or delete portions of the transcripts. In addition, this process allows you the opportunity to reflect upon our conversation, and possibly gain new understandings of the issue sat hand. Only after you have approved the transcript will I begin to analyze the text of our conversation.

Again, I would like to thank you for your generosity in volunteering your time and energy for this research project. I look forward to meeting with you as well as to our conversation.

Sincerely,

Ms. Kristine Nelson
Researcher, Doctoral Student
University of San Francisco
Organization and Leadership

E-mail: xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
Telephone: xxx-xxx-xxxx

Appendix C - Approval Letter for the Use of Human Subjects

Subject: **IRB Application # 07-019 - Application Approved**
From: **XXXXXXXXXXXX**
Sent: **Saturday, April 14, 2007 2:06:35 PM**
To: **xxxxxxxxxxx**
CC: **xxxxxxxxxxx**

April 14, 2007

Dear Ms. Nelson:

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco (USF) has reviewed your request for human subjects approval regarding your study.

Your application has been approved by the committee (IRBPHS #07-019). Please note the following:

1. Approval expires twelve (12) months from the dated noted above. At that time, if you are still in collecting data from human subjects, you must file a renewal application.

2. Any modifications to the research protocol or changes in instrumentation (including wording of items) must be communicated to the IRBPHS. Re-submission of an application may be required at that time.

3. Any adverse reactions or complications on the part of participants must be reported (in writing) to the IRBPHS within ten (10) working days.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRBPHS at (415) 422-6091.

On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your research.

Sincerely,

Terence Patterson, EdD, ABPP
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
---
IRBPHS University of San Francisco
Counseling Psychology Department
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http://www.usfca.edu/humansubjects/

Appendix D - Sample Thank You Letter

Date

Participant Name
Address

Dear Mr./Ms.,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me on _____.
I sincerely appreciate your willingness to participate in this research project. I believe our conversation will be a valuable part of my dissertation.

I have attached a copy of the transcribed conversation. Once you have approved this transcript, it will provide the basis for data which will eventually be integrated into an exploration of issues in relation to Nepalese international students in higher education. As we have discussed, data from this research project are not confidential.

Please take some time to review the attached transcripts. You may add changes or clarify comments you believe are appropriate. I will contact you in two weeks to discuss any changes you have made.

Again, I thank you for your generous participation.

Sincerely,

Ms. Kristine Nelson
Researcher, Doctoral Student
University of San Francisco
Organization and Leadership

E-mail: xxxxxxxxxx
Telephone: xxxxxxxxxx

Appendix E - Field Study Conversation Transcript

This is a transcription of research conversation that was the basis for analysis in the pilot study for this research issue. The conversation was between Kristine Nelson and Sanjeev Khadaka at Southwest Minnesota State University in Marshall, Minnesota in the International Student Office conference room. The conversation lasted an hour, and this was the second time Kristine and Sanjeev met for a conversation.

Kristine: Hello Sanjeev! I'm glad you were able to make it today.

Sanjeev Khadaka: Yeah, good to see you Kristine. How are you doing?

K: I'm good. I saw Pinkey this morning and we had a nice talk. She's busy looking for jobs in the Cities you know. Getting ready for graduation. Soon that is going to be you!

SK: Yeah, but like I have more work to do before that, you know, my classes are hard this semester.

K: Well, I really appreciate you coming after your class. What class did you have this morning? I know you told me the other night but I forgot.

SK: I had macro and now I have micro (economics). It's for my business classes so it is necessary.

K: For me I think macro-economic would be more interesting.

SK: More interesting. Because I didn't study seriously (laughing), that's the big problem with me because like, I didn't like economics that much and I am not so much interested in that. So that's why I didn't take so much interest in this class. I just want to pass, that's all. Because I have more interest in like justice classes, like criminal justice classes.

K: like you were talking about the other night

SK: Yeah. Last time I was talking about that.

K: One of the things that I have become more and more interested in in the last year is justice, not in the criminal justice sense but just in our everyday organizations, like our schools. What does justice mean in an educational setting? And how do you achieve justice for the students out there, for the people working, and for you? Those are the kinds of questions that I am interested in about justice.

SK: Wow. That's good. Yeah. I would like to be more in some kind of federal work. You know, I don't want to be famous and all that, but I want to be famous inside you know. Just to be like doing my work and trying to help local fighters, like no one will even know you but you are doing the best work in this war, that is the kind of work I want, like a secret agent or something like that (laughing), you know that makes me very desperate to do that kind of thing because I couldn't go in the military, so I just want to do something as compared to something like the federal job. I would just do it on my own, so that nobody knows and I could just do it myself.

K: There is someone I have been reading called Paul Ricoeur and I really agree with his ideas, what you might be talking about is what he calls "to live the good life with and for others in just institutions".

SK: Yeah.

K: And that's what he writes about, and that's what he believes in, so it's how do you live a good life for you, and how do you translate that into relationships with other people and then also in the organizations that you are a part of, how do you make that idea he talks about a realization.

SK: Wow. Is that a book?

K: It is a book, and it is a whole philosophy. He talks a lot about justice and making things meaningful for you and in your relationships with other people.

SK: Yeah. That's good.

K: And it's not about being famous or about getting recognition. It's about that feeling inside.

SK: It makes you feel good you know. Like, the kind of thing you are doing, it makes you feel good, and it satisfies your soul. That's the big thing you know.

K: Yes. That's it.

SK: It's not about the money or anything, but it makes you feel good because I am doing that thing.

K: So, if you pursue criminal justice would it be here, or in Belgium or in Nepal?

(There was a change in Sanjeev's tone from somewhat light-hearted and laughing a little bit to a more serious tone.)

SK: I am not sure because like I'll see the opportunity, but like I really want to do it in my own country, but because of the situation and because of the modernization and globalization you can go anywhere and you can do anything. So, I prefer to do it in (pause), but don't call me like an ethnocentric or something, it's not like that, but people would really prefer to work in their own community, their own culture. You know, I am from Asia so I prefer to work in Asian communities and, maybe you like to work in American culture because it is totally different. So, if I get a chance, a good opportunity over there, as like in America I am getting the same job as I am getting in my country, or back somewhere over there, I will prefer to go over there.

K: I don't think that's ethnocentric.

SK: Yeah, that is normal but some one can say like that, you know there are lots of people and there are different kinds of people, and some people think like that. You know, like someone asks me, "What you want to do after this? And I say "Okay, like I want to go back home." The other person says, "Why, you don't want to stay here? You don't like this?" You know, they can act like that. People like their own country, they feel comfortable, comfortable in the sense you know, you can express yourself.

K: I think another way of phrasing it for me is, there is this sense of connectedness that you have in your own country and your own culture, or culture similar to yours that is sometimes lost when you are in a foreign.

SK: Yeah, and over here once you have to live a life like in the American lifestyle then in the other way you have to live a life like in your own culture so you are having like two things all together you know, because like you have to be good in the workplace. Like everywhere, so you have to adapt the culture over here like the American lifestyle.

K: I'd like to hear more about that, because this morning Pinkey was talking about the same thing. Do you feel that is part of being successful here, that you need to.

SK: Yeah. That is the biggest thing because up to now what I found is that if you want to be successful, you have to mingle with people. Because I have to adapt the culture. Like, we are both sitting at a table right and we are having our lunch. I can't have that lunch in my own way like which I do back home. I have to do the way which you do. We have a phrase, in our country we call it (Nepalese phrase ? Desa de, desa sues.?). It means like, how do I say it? (sigh of frustration)

K: It's okay, however you can explain it.

SK: Okay. When you change the country, you have to change your whole dress, you know, you have to change everything.

K: That's a saying.

SK: Yeah. That's a saying. It means like if you go to south, you have to be like a south people. If you go to the east side, you will be like an east guy. Something like that. You know, like if you go to Europe, you have to be like them.

K: We have an expression in English. "When in Rome, do like the Romans."

SK: Yeah. That's the same thing. That's what I mean. You have to have two things all together in your life. Sometimes you have to be, and it's very difficult you know like, to change your culture. But, many people do, right. Many people change their culture in the sense like they totally neglect their culture. Like most of the people who come over here in America, like most of the immigrants who came over here, when they tried to stay over here and have a good life, the people who came from Europe and other countries you know, they are from the north population. They forget their culture, like they forget their language. As Sandy was telling me last night, you remember, like there are so many Belgium people they forget their language. Even Sandy forgot hers, you know, her mother, your grandmom she spoke Norwegian. You know, you are forgetting your old culture. You should keep it alive. That's what I mean.

K: I think that the way it has happened in the past is like what you said, there are certain expectations that people who come here will give up their language and their culture to become American, and I think there is a better way. I do think that it is possible for people to come here from wherever and that there should be a process of learning involved. Take SMSU for example. I think there is a lot of pressure put on international students from themselves and from others to change and to be like American students. But, I think it should go both ways.

SK: Yeah.

K: I think there should be more learning and sharing between, and an openness.

SK: Yeah. You are right. But, I didn't say it was the fault of the students over here. It's not their fault because what I have found is that in Asian culture, those people are quiet. They don't come up, what I mean is that we don't come up and try to speak up the first thing. And over here in American culture everyone is frank and everybody tries to be friendly. But you know, you can't have a clap with one hand. You need both hands. So if you do not go, they will not come, right? So now, last time when I was talking with you, I must have said to you that some people come and some people don't. Because the first big thing is communication, and we are lacking in communication. If we can improve our English, they can easily be our friends. Because this is the 21st century, and we can't say that we are all different and

everything. You know, every law says we are all equal and everything is good, and everything IS good, so now, what I mean to say it is because of the culture you know. You have been instilled in the Asian culture for like 18, 20 years and now you came over here and that 18 to 20 years, what you learned within that 20 years back home you can't change within one or two years.

K: Of course not.

SK: It takes time, even like five or ten years and then we can understand what it is really.
That's what I think, you know. So I have to learn a lot and I have to understand a lot.

K: I think even for American students, and for international students too, when you enter the university, you bring with you 18 years of history. Personal history, community histories, family histories, country history. And that all comes with you and no one should be expected to push that history aside to start new. It's not possible. It's not fair. It's not that justice that we were talking about earlier. So, I think finding ways to have students here recognize the histories of others and respect those histories would be a big step in moving forward in understanding for everyone.

SK: It takes time you know, because if you go to Minneapolis, you see lots of different people, and people of color and all that. But in this area, this area is a little bit, I'm not saying backward, but like people doesn't go out from this place that much. I can give you an example, in summer I met a girl and she said she never gone to Minneapolis, and I was like, "Minneapolis is the capital city, right. You haven't been there?" She said no, and I asked her how old she was. She was like 19 and she had never been in a plane either. I was surprised. America is such big country and such a developed country and still you have some people who haven't come out and seen outside of this place. There are some people like this here. And when they see the people from the outside world coming over here at SMSU, it is totally different for them [the American students] I think because they have never seen black haired people, or brown guys or black guys. So they find it a little bit disturbing or something. I think that is the big thing (laughing). Even if in our country we would see some American people, like if you would go over there to the village area, a rural area, those people would also look at you and say, "Who are they?" They will do the same thing. It's the human nature. You can't change it.

K: Just this week I have spent a lot of time sitting in the student center, just watching and listening to the students, observing their interactions. It is so different from when I was a student here because you do see so many international students on campus now and students of color from the Cultural Diversity Office. You see these students everywhere, but there is not a lot of mixing going on. You see certain students here at this table talking, and other students over there. And you don't see these groups of international students and American students coming together and interacting very much. This is something that I don't think will change easily, but I think some efforts at creating relationships and authentic opportunities to come together between all

these different groups would benefit everyone on campus. Because those students you were talking about, the American ones that have never been 3 hours away to the capital of the state, for those students this experience in college at SMSU could be a really important part of their lives in that they do have the opportunity to meet people who are very different from themselves, but who have very human stories to share that anyone can relate to.

SK: Yeah, I feel the same way, but as I said, you said, if you go to Rome, do like the Romans. You know, we came over here and we just have to do this. You know, you try once, you fall down. Just try once more. Fall down. Try once more. One day you will succeed, right. One day you will go, and you will get it. So if you want my opinion, (pause), why do just the international students mingle with each other? Why don't they go out? But, I found like in the first two or three years they are not that experienced and they don't know. Two or three years, that is not enough. But when you go to your senior classes, when you try to be in a group, you try to join some organizations, or you try to get a job, then you got to know about the people and you got to know about the culture and everything. It's very hard for us to mingle with the people around here because I have seen, there are some of my seniors who have girlfriends who are American and I found a good change in them, a very different change in them. How they speak, how they interact with the people. For example, in my country if I have a party and I invite you, I will pay for everything. But now when I see those seniors here, like last time when I called them to come to my party, they even bring their own beer. They have changed you know, because they are in this society and they try to go and meet people. So you know, you will do that thing, but it takes time and you have to solve something from your side also, like I said, it takes two hands to clap. If we think no one is coming and no one wants to talk with us, then it is useless because nobody will come in the future. That thing makes you racist, a kind of racist you know. Like if I say hi to you, if you are not in a good mood and you don't even make a response to me. That doesn't mean you are racist or something. I also do the same thing. If anybody say hi to me and I am not in a good mood or I have a bad exam, or I had a bad day, then I don't even respond. Sometimes I do. So that is what I found here, that is what I learned. I don't know, am I right or not. That is what I found, just keep on trying and just keep on going and one day you will get the success, you will be that person. That is what I think.

K: When I have seen you on campus it looks like you know quite a few people around here.

SK: Most of the time I try to talk with other people coming out of my class. Like, there was one dude in my class in a wheelchair, and he's a basketball player. We were in the business law class about 2 semesters ago, so he never talked with me. Today, I just went by him and I said, "Hey, hi, how are you doing? How was your business law class?" And his response to me was great, he even remembered my name! I didn't even remember his name! I never talked with him, but we had groups and all of that thing in class, but he remembered my name and he asked me about my classes and my major and all that. You know, everyday I am experiencing new things

over here. Everyday is a new day for me, and I am experiencing something new. Sometimes it is good, sometimes it is bad, but I AM experiencing.

K: I think these are great comments you are sharing and reflections you have made about your experience here. Really, I think you are very insightful about this experience and I appreciate you taking the time to talk to me again. If I haven't said that already. Before we continue, I'd like to ask you if you want to make anymore comments about the transcripts I sent you from our previous conversation. I know you made some comments already, but I just wanted to give you the chance to add anything else. Remember the questions I asked you about, how you found out about SMSU, why you chose to come here, and to tell about your experience since you became a student here.

SK: Um, there was one thing, just the name here. It was me who is a business student, he was the computer major.

K: Oh, I see. I was worried about that because there were two if you and as I was transcribing it was hard to tell at one point who was talking. I'm really sorry about that, but it is easy to change. But in terms of the themes, like I asked why students came here and I found that the opportunity to study abroad was one reason and the other one was because of the situation in Nepal.

S: Yeah.

K: Would you add anything to that?

S: You mean why we come over here?

K: Yeah. The two responses I got from most everyone was the opportunity that your parents saw and also with the Maoist rebels and the situation now in Nepal it is not safe and it is uncertain and the education is disrupted. Do you want to add anything to that?

SK: Well, if you want to add that or not I don't know. I am just giving my idea. Why I came over here? Because everybody in Nepal, today, even if he is a genius, even if he is poor, everybody want to go out of the country. It is because if you are a doctor right, you are a heart surgeon, you are going to stay in Nepal. We can go like this in India too, all in Asia. You don't get that much facilities, that much respect, that much money. You know, money is a big thing because if you don't have money there is nothing. And you can't even go up even if you are a very good heart surgeon. There is little chance for you to go up. Why? Because there is so corruptions and all those things. For example, you and me right. You score 99 percent, and I score 99 percent, but I am a minister's son, or I am a very rich family guy, or a royal family, or I am very connected to the royal family. And you are from a very middle class family. If I get 72 percent and you got 99, they will give me, and they will not give you. That

makes most of the people frustrated nowadays, because you deserve that thing but you don't get it.

K: So do you think people from the higher caste, or the privileges classes are staying more in Nepal?

SK: No. They are not staying. You haven't seen the poor guys over here in America. All the guys who come over here, they are from higher, middle classes. If you want to see the guys over there, there are so many geniuses. They are unlucky. I show pity on them because those guys deserve a lot (more) than us, but we are from middle or higher class families and like our parents can afford so we just, we got lucky and we come over here. But those guys back home, they are geniuses, they are more brilliant than us, but they don't get the chance. And they just stay there and that is why they try to get privilege in our country. That's why Maoists came. That's why other organizations came, that's why the college kids get frustrated. You know, they try to have good things. Like, if you come from a poor family you try to go to the city, like Katmandu, to go to the university, because from their family no one had gone to universities or college, even their grandfather's father. And they get a chance to go and study in university. University is corrupt you know! Even if they work hard, even if they try to get like good marks, they don't get the chance. What should they do? Because they got a brain. So they try to do a revolt. Revolt in the sense like try to mingle with politics because you want money. Because what should they do? They need money to fill their stomachs, and they try hard and try hard and they can't have anything. For one, two, three years they can't succeed even if they got 99 percent they can't even get admission in a medical college and all that, then they just think, okay, what we will do? Alright, this government is not good, just try to change the government. Every time there is strikes going on in college, it is because of that. So these guys, go in political groups, they go and that is how the whole system in Nepal is being like.

K: Let me ask you a question related to that. Do you think, using your imagination, do you think there is a way for people to change this social situation without violence?

SK: Yeah. Uh, just my imagination?

K: Yeah, that's what I want you to think about.

SK: I don't support Maoists, I don't support the royal family, the king, because this is the 21st century and you can't have a king. Even if you have a king, the king shouldn't do anything with the government. He just live in his palace. We should give chance to young people in new generation to come up, give them some facilities. The guy who deserve it, just try to give it to him. The big thing is corruption. Try to get rid of it. I know many rich countries are corrupt. Japan is corrupt, even though it is so rich. But why is Nepal not doing that thing? It is a big question. It is a big question mark. I am talking about the poor family. But even in the rich family they

want to send their children out of the country so they can live there, they don't come back over there. Why is that? That is a big question. I can't even imagine what should we do. We need to make a big plan for that, this is not a small thing we can just discuss. But, it is a big plan- we have to think a lot about this because we have to change the whole country.

K: I know it's not a small question.

SK: It's a very big thing. Even like more than half of the country is still rural. My granddad, he was in the British army, that is why he got a chance to move to the city. Even when I was small at that time my granddad used to live in a village. I was born in 1984, at that time there was no proper city. No proper sanitation, no proper water, nothing. Still, there is so much of this problem. When I was seven years old, when I went to India, there was a big river, and they tried to make.

K: A dam?

SK: (laughing) A bridge. They tried to make a bridge when I was seven years old. They did everything, they brought all of the materials over there. After seven or eight years, when I was fifteen I went back to that place because I wanted to visit my ancestor's place. I went back over there and still that project was there, and where was the money? Because the government sent money, like Japan, China, they come over here. They send the money.

K: Yeah. Foreign investment.

SK: Yes. They give the money to government, so the big officials, they take a little bit. Then if they give 1 billion, they take like one-third of that amount. Then it goes down. So now the middle officers, they will take one-third and it will go down. Then the subordinates and all those, they take some. And when it comes to the last, there is nothing. What will they do? That bridge, it would take one year to make. But even today, I don't think that bridge is yet built. So the system is like that.

K: That's an interesting story you shared . . .

S: Yeah, so what we will do? And because of some politicians the whole country is going down, down, down. And there is no economy and there is no nothing. All is depending on China, all is depending on India. What are we doing?

K: So part of the problem is foreign aid?

SK: Yeah. This foreign aid. If we don't have foreign aid we are all gone. Nothing is there. The country will vanish. If this trend will keep on going, one day half of Nepal will look like Somalia. It can be like Somalia. You know, the civil war is going on now there. How the people are migrating over here. It [Nepal] will be like Somalia one day. No, even worse than Somalia because Maoists is taking like half of

the country, they have taken some of the village areas. And in the economy and in the business also, India has taken all of that. All of the businesses, all the big businesses have been taken by Indian people. A little bit of the market, this has been taken over by China. And what do we [Nepalese] have? We have nothing, we don't even grow. Nothing. There is nothing. And all that thing is depend on those who go out of the country, those who are lucky, those who get the green cards, or citizenship. They will stay over there [abroad]. And those who are not lucky they will just come back [to Nepal]. And they will try to send their sons away. That is the shame going on now. You know, one guy can't do anything. You need some people with ideas, with experience and everything. One thing I tell you. The Maoist leader, he is one of the brilliant guys in the whole Asia. He did PhD in like 4 or 5 subjects. Such a brilliant guy has gone that way. That's the thing, that's what is going on. The country is going way down, people are coming out. Students are coming out. And that's how there are no rebels. I am telling you what I think. The students are coming here and they are staying here. Some people's families they can afford it. They send their kid here, he transfers to some community college. Try to work hard, try to send some money back home. And one day they will forget, and after 5 or 10 years they will get citizenship, and they will get success. Or, they are unlucky, no citizenship and they become illegal.

K: So let me ask you a question. I've asked you to think about the future and to use your imagination. Having come to the United States for your university degree at SMSU, has that change how you see the future, and if it has changed, how? I mean, you came here to go to college, has this experience changed how you imagine your future will be? I know that when I left Marshall to go and study in France, that experience changed how I saw my future and changed the person I am today.

SK: When I came over here, I just thought I would come to America and it would be like Nepal, you know just having fun and just doing nothing. But when I came over here and I meet with the people, and like when I see the study patterns and when I see the future and everything, then I decided to do something in my life. I don't want to tell the secret plans (laughing) and everything, but it is in my mind. One day I will do it. You know, when I came here and I see the people, and when I see the hard life, I make a commitment to myself. I will do something which will help me and which will help many peoples. And, I don't want to tell you like what it is. (laughing)

K: (laughing) It's okay, you don't have to tell me. I understand.

SK: You must know me like after ten years and you will see I will do something which will help lots of people in Nepal. That's my future. I will do something for myself and I will do something which will help my country.

K: I believe you Sanjeev. I really do.

SK: Yeah! See me like after ten or fifteen years. Let's see.

K: I'll keep track of you. (laughing)

SK: If I am true. Let's see. That's why I am struggling. That is why I am trying so hard. That's why I am so desperate to know the cultural way here. That's why I know so many good guys over here, so many bad guys also, I know everybody. I am the kind of guy who tries to mingle with everybody. You can ask any of the Nepalese people actually because I just try to be friendly. I try to be friendly. I try to say hi, how are you and everything. Why? Because I want to know. I want to know. I want to know, like why. You know, in 1920 you had a Great Depression here. You had a WWI and a WWII, and the whole country was so down. And how the country has developed so much. Why Japan? The atomic bomb was dropped in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, why that country develop that much? Why not our country develop? We should also do something. I am not saying develop. I am saying at least do something good for yourself. Nobody knows. You know, when I was in New York, some guys asked me where I was from, and I told them Nepal. They said," Nepal? Where is that?" We have to tell them where it is, and they think it is part of China or India. We don't have any like, we don't have any.

K: Identity?

SK: Yeah. We don't have any. Most of the world don't know us. I am telling you the truth now (laughing). I don't know what I am saying. Remember I told you I was in India. When I was a student there we were not many. We don't have that much Nepalese friends over there. In our hostel we had like 100, 150 Nepalese students and not more than that. And we had some Nepalese students who now are the citizens of India. So, I haven't been in Nepal that much, just on holiday. What I found is that they don't want to come out. They don't want to come out and explore, and know.

K: Who doesn't want to?

SK: The community. The people over there. You see it over here too. People just try to be in their own life. Even like the Hmong students have this. This is because of the culture. They should try to come out, and sometimes if you come out and you take that big step you will be out. But if you do not take that big step you will never come out. And I want to take that big step.

K: I think it would be interesting to explore why some people do choose to take that step, they make a conscious decision and others either consciously choose not to, or it never occurs to them to try. I mean, here you are and you really are making an effort.

SK: I am trying to, the last two years. I am trying, and I know I will be trying for many years. (pause) Oh my goodness!

K: What? Oh no, are you late for a class?

SK: No, what time will you leave?

K: As soon as we are done, I will go leave. My mom is taking me to the airport.

SK: Seriously?

K: Why?

SK: I have something for you.

K: That's okay. I will see you again soon. The next time I am here you will come out to my parents' house again for dinner.

SK: You know, yesterday one of my Nepalese friends, she asked me about the basket you gave me. She wanted to know who gave it to me. I told her Sandy's daughter gave it to me. She said she had a Nepalese Kutar to give you, and I looked at my bag and I don't have it. I supposed to see her this morning, but I came later.

K: I'll see you again.

SK: The other night it was so nice of you and you are so patient. I feel so good that day when you called and you invite me to dinner.

K: My parents and I had such a nice time.

SK: I really liked that, I told you that was the first time I went out and went to an American family and had a dinner. That was great.

K: My dad just said to me again yesterday how nice that was. He enjoyed talking to you a lot. You know, he's one of those guys who doesn't go to Minneapolis and he doesn't get on a plane, so when he can meet someone like you, he learns a lot through those conversations. So, thank you very much.

SK: The last thing I want to say is good luck.

K: This will help me a lot and I really appreciate you taking the time to meet me and talk with me again today.